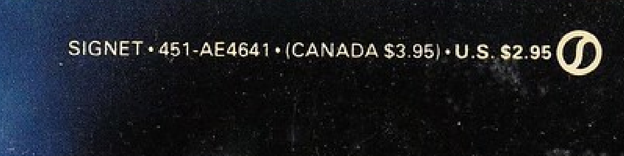



HE'S BACK
AND YOU WON'T WANT
TO BE ALONE.

# JASON LIVES

## FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI

A novel by SIMON HAWKE
based on the screenplay written by
TOM McLOUGHLIN

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM PARAMOUNT PICTURES.

***It was dark at the gravesite...***
***And very late…***

The wind was whipping at Tommy's jacket as storm clouds threatened to explode. But Tommy Jarvis stayed right where he was to make sure. He had to be sure-once and for-all-that Jason was finally and completely dead.

"I'll never rest until I open the coffin and see him for myself," Tommy said aloud.

He went to work with his shovel and dug hard and deep. Breathing faster and faster, he finally reached the grave and stopped. Staring down at the rotten corpse inside it, his lips quivered with fury and he raised the iron spear and thrust it into the decaying remains of the evil Jason.

A lightning bolt sliced the sky. Jason's dead eyelids flashed open...

# JASON LIVES

# FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART VI

# PROLOGUE

There's something about being in the woods after the sun's gone down and the stillness descends. The shadows lengthen and the night cries start—listen, what was that? Somewhere close by, it sounded like a scream. Only a night bird, perhaps. Or maybe it was something else, something—or someone—encountering a predator out in the dark, alone. Alone and vulnerable. Maybe that's what it is about being in the woods at night; you feel the vulnerability, buried memories from a long forgotten time begin to echo deep in your subconscious and you remember, way down inside, what it was like to be alone out in the dark, alone and vulnerable, while all around you, things you cannot see are on the prowl. Sometimes you can hear them. Very close. A rustling in the bushes just behind you. The snapping of a twig. The safety of civilization seems very far away now, almost an illusion, and instinct tells you to huddle close around the fire as the flames die down. There is safety in the light, but maybe even that is an illusion and, in any case, the fire will soon die down to embers as the darkness gathers close. The darkness that shelters the unknown. It comes out of the darkness, violent, swift and terrible, and when it comes, there's no escape. There's only a brief, hysterical paralysis as you freeze like a frightened little animal and feel the pain, savage and incandescent, and then the final darkness gathers you and, somewhere, perhaps not too far away, people huddled by a fire hear your scream and try to tell themselves that it was only a small creature of the night. Huddle close and listen. This is how it all began.

The time was the summer of 1958. The place was... Crystal Lake. A young boy drowned. He was a very quiet boy, not exactly shy, just... quiet. He kept to himself a lot. The other children all avoided him. There's always one; one child the others isolate for one reason or another, the one who becomes the victim, the outsider, the one who's picked on and made fun of. But no one ever picked on Jason Vorhees. They just stayed away from him. And if you asked them why, they really couldn't tell you. There was just something about him, something strange and eerie, something that made your skin crawl. Even the counselors avoided him. He kept to himself and did everything alone. Like that night, that very unlucky night, that Jason went out swimming in the lake alone. Alone and in the dark. They never found his body.

The scene changes. One year later, two counselors are murdered. A young boy and a young girl. They had been making love. The newspaper wrote about the savage, brutal slaying. The bodies had been slashed to ribbons. Blood was everywhere, splattered on the walls and dripping from the ceiling. Then there were the fires, clearly arson, and police suspected that whoever was responsible was the

same one who did the killing, but the case was never solved. The camp was closed. The buildings slowly went to ruin. The woods moved in and took over the clearings. Camp Crystal Lake became abandoned, overgrown... but not forgotten. Sometimes, at night, the townspeople would gather in the bar—the modern equivalent of a tribal campfire—and they would tell stories about what happened in the woods at Crystal Lake. Stories about someone—or something—hiding out there in the woods, watching and waiting.

They tried to open the camp again in ’62, but there was some kind of trouble with the water. The official story was that "it was bad." But the townspeople gathered in the bar and talked about the water being poisoned. Camp Crystal Lake received a brand new name as the stories circulated. It was referred to as "Camp Blood."

Superstition. Legends. Stories told around the campfire to frighten little children. That was what the people said who opened the camp again just recently, only a few short years ago. And then people started dying horribly. The Christy family, the original owners of the camp, went broke, but Steve Christy was determined to prove that it was just bad luck and nothing more. It was bad luck, for Steve Christy. He lost the twenty-five thousand dollars he spent refurbishing the camp and he lost his life, as well. He became one of the victims. Seven people died that year and there was only one survivor, a young girl who managed to live long enough to learn the awful truth. The killer had been Jason’s mother, driven mad with grief and bent on vengeance, blaming those who worked the camp for the drowning of her son. The girl who survived was almost killed herself, but in the struggle by the lake, she managed to pick up a machete and, with a wild, desperate swing, she chopped Mrs. Vorhees’s head off. They found the woman’s headless body, but they never found her head. The girl was taken to an institution, babbling about a drowned boy in the lake. "He’s out there," she kept saying, Over and over. "He’s still out there."

Camp Blood was closed again, declared off limits by the town police. And the stories kept on being told, stories about the boy who had never really drowned, but who had survived to live alone out in the forest, like a wild animal. It was said that he had seen his mother being killed, witnessed her decapitation, and that the sight had snapped his mind. And there was another story, the one about the girl who had killed Jason’s mother. She was found brutally murdered in her home, hacked to pieces, several months after what happened at the camp. And that case, too, was never solved. Legend, some said. Superstition. Stories told around a campfire to frighten little children. But others nodded knowingly and mumbled. "He’s still out there."

The scene changes once again. Another summer and a

counselor training center is opened on the shores of Crystal Lake, near the site of the old abandoned camp. This time, there were eight corpses found. Ginny Field, a psych major in college, survived with multiple stab wounds and she told a tale of an insane, horribly disfigured killer hiding in a tumbledown shack somewhere in the woods, by Crystal Lake. She had seen the decomposing head of Mrs. Vorhees in that shack, surrounded by candles on the table, as if it were an icon on an altar. It was Jason, she insisted. "He's still out there."

Scene changes once again. A country cabin near the shores of Crystal Lake. A quiet place named Higgins Haven, rented to vacationers. There were ten bodies this time, seven kids who had taken the cabin for the summer and three bikers who had come to raise some hell—and found it. There was only one survivor, a girl who was driven mad by the ordeal. They found the body of the killer in the bam, but she kept insisting that he wasn't really dead. Yet, he seemed dead enough. They found him with an axe embedded in his head. It had penetrated the thick plastic of the hockey mask the killer had taken from one of his victims and it had split his skull. He was dead, all right. No one could survive that. They took his body to the morgue and the papers wrote about the death of Jason Vorhees. The terror of Crystal Lake was finally over. And then they found the bodies in the morgue. And the killer's corpse was nowhere to be found.

A dozen killings later, they found Jason once again. He had returned to Crystal Lake and taken vengeance on a houseful of vactioning high school students and the family that lived next door. The Jarvis family. Little Tommy Jarvis spent the next ten years locked up in various institutions traumatized by the self-defense murder of the killer. They found him standing over Jason's body, hitting it repeatedly with a machete, screaming, "Die! Die!" They had to drag the boy away. They put Tommy Jarvis in a padded cell and they buried the mutilated body of Jason Vorhees. This time, the people in the town said it was really over. This time he's dead and buried.

Years passed and then the killings started once again. It happened at a place called Pinehurst Sanitarium, a halfway house for people coming out of institutions and getting ready to go back into the world. A place to which Tommy Jarvis had been transfered from the Unger Institute of Mental Health. It began when one of the patients suffered a violent relapse and attacked another patient with an axe. By the time they were able to restrain him, the lawn was covered with the scattered pieces of the victim's body. The sight of the dismembered corpse brought back all of Tommy's nightmares. Jason began to haunt him once again. And then the patients started dying. One grisly murder followed on the heels of another and Tommy Jarvis started to believe that Jason had possessed him, that he had become his own worst

enemy, but the spree of killings ended when Tommy confronted "Jason" in the barn at Pinehurst Sanitarium and threw him from the hayloft to his death. It wasn't Jason, but a local paramedic, one of the men who had brought Tommy to Pinehurst from the institution. The boy who had been killed by the patient suffering the relapse was the paramedic's son and the sight of his own child's dismembered body had unhinged the man. He had assumed Jason's identity to cover up his crimes, but the story became added to the legend and it was said that Jason cast his influence out over the town even from the grave. For Tommy Jarvis, it was real.

Dead or not, Jason had possessed him and he could not drive the thought of him out of his tortured mind. One night, he broke the window in his room and his therapist found him, wearing Jason's hockey mask and brandishing a knife. She brought' him out of it, and with her patient help, Tommy Jarvis started to come back. But he knew it wasn't over. The violence was never very far away. It always lurked just below the surface, ready to strike, terrible and sudden, and Tommy was convinced that there was only one solution. He kept it to himself, because if he told anyone about it, he knew they'd put him right back inside the padded cell again.

And now he's out. After years of living with the nightmare, Tommy's out, determined to lay it to rest once and for all. The only way to deal with mindless fear is to confront it. And that means a return to Crystal Lake.

Now it begins again.

# ONE

Life is just something that happens to you while you're busy making other plans. The phrase ran bitterly through Tommy Jarvis's mind. John Lennon had written it that way, but Tommy figured that if the word "death" was exchanged for "life," it worked even better. *Death is just something that happens to you while you're busy making other plans.* Yeah, that's where it's at, all right. As much as he hated to correct John Lennon, the world was beat or be beaten, eat or be eaten. That was the savage bottom line, the hard and brutal truth of existence.

His battered Ford pickup truck roared around a bend in the road, spinning crazily onward, its headlights suddenly spotlighting a graphic slice of life—a scene specially staged to match his frenzied, morbid thoughts. Frozen in the glaring headlights, like a picture snapped by a deranged photographer, was the image of a mangy dog standing in the center of the road, its dripping muzzle lifted from the exploded carcass of a rabbit recently run over by a passing car. The rabbit had simply tried to cross the road and death had come screaming down out of the darkness in the form of several tons of speeding automative steel. The tiny animal was paralyzed with fear for a split second, then smashed flat, its body bursting like a paper bag full of raw hamburger. The machine shot on into the night, leaving behind it a bloody mass of pulped meat and ruptured entrails. Death had come along and changed that rabbit's plans and now another of God's abandoned creatures, a starving and emaciated dog that was only trying to survive, had come to feed upon the grisly carcass. Its eyes were lambent in the headlights for a moment as it froze, staring at the truck barreling down upon it, and as Tommy swerved, the terrified animal fled into the woods, having barely missed sharing the rabbit's ugly fate.

It's just a cycle, Tommy Jarvis thought, just a lousy, endless fucking cycle that never gives anyone or anything a chance. Life doesn't just wear you down; it pounds you relentlessly into the ground and smashes you flat into a bloody pulp. The pickup truck struck a pothole and swerved toward the right side of the road. Tommy blinked, jerking back the wheel and getting back on course, taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly. He gripped the steering wheel tightly to stop his hands from shaking.

Man, get a hold of yourself, he thought. That was really sick. Maintain. If you keep thinking about things like that, they'll slam you right back in the cage, inside that soundproof, padded cell, where no one can hear you scream. And you just can't go back there, boy, not ever. Not again. Some things are worse than death. Besides, you've

got a job to do. Unfinished business. He glanced down briefly at the hockey mask that Allen Hawes was holding in his hands, almost surprised to remember that he had a passenger on this hellish ride.

"I don't know how the hell you talked me into this, Jarvis," Allen Hawes said, his southern voice betraying a hard and desperate edge. He was a few years older than Tommy Jarvis, in his mid-twenties, and he was sitting tensely in the passenger seat, his body rigid, his teeth clamped down on a cheap cigar. He was chewing on it as if it were a pacifier, working it around in his mouth with nervous energy. Hawes was spooked. The whole thing was getting to him. He couldn't seem to adjust to being out. He had spent most of his life in psychiatric institutions and he felt unprotected in the outside world. He was gripping the hockey mask so tightly that if it had been made of anything else but that tough, resilient plastic, his white-knuckled fingers would have punched right through it.

They were driving relentlessly through the night, as if there was some giant magnet at the other end of the road, pulling their truck inexorably toward it. Yeah, that's exactly what it's like, thought Tommy. He felt as though there was some incredibly powerful, invisible force tugging on him. There was no fighting it. It was pulling him through the night while thunder crashed all around them like the beating of a giant kettledrum. Tommy stared at the road without focusing, thinking only of the drums the Roman galley masters used in those old adventure movies like *Ben Hur.* The drum pounded out the rowing cadence for the slaves chained to the oars, doomed to live the remainder of their miserable lives in the darkness of the lower decks, rowing until their hearts burst.

"Jarvis? Jarvis!"

Tommy blinked and shook his head. Maintain, maintain...

"I'm okay. I'm okay, man."

"Hell, I *must* be crazy," Hawes said, looking back out through the windshield. "If the old institution ever found out about this, boy, they'd throw our butts back in and straitjacket 'em permanent."

"You didn't have to come, Hawes," Tommy said, clenching his teeth. He didn't need to be reminded about that place and Hawes continually reminded him. Obviously Allen couldn't believe that they were out, so he kept reminding himself that all of this was real and not just another crazy hallucination. Yeah, it's real, man, Tommy thought. And it's about to get a lot more real. He stared out into the darkness ahead of them, a look of grim determination set on his face. "This is between me and Jason."

"Yeah, I know, but I still don't get the therapy here," said Hawes, uncertainly, as if he didn't really know why Tommy was doing this. Tommy guessed he didn't, but then again, how could he? Even

though they had talked about it endlessly, talking about it could never begin to compare to living it. Hawes was only trying to get a handle on reality so he could find a way to deal with it. That's all any of us can really do, thought Tommy. Try to maintain. Try to get a handle on it. The trouble is that my handle's slick with blood and I have to squeeze that fucker with everything I've got or I'll lose my grip. And it's a long, long fall over the edge.

"All you need to know is Jason's dead, right?" said Hawes. "Seeing his corpse ain't gonna stop your hallucinations."

"Seeing it won't," said Tommy, "but *destroying* him once and for all will." He shot Hawes a savage look. "Jason belongs in hell. I'm gonna see he gets there."

Hawes swallowed hard as he watched Tommy Jarvis drive. We might beat this Jason character there, if Tommy keeps on driving like this, he thought. He chewed nervously on the cigar and turned to glance out the back window into the bed of the pickup truck. Lightning flashed, briefly illuminating the rusty pickup bed, which contained a large ten-gallon can of gasoline, a crowbar, and a couple of shovels. It was all bouncing around back there and Hawes wondered what would happen if the can of gasoline broke open. Thunder rumbled and he turned back to look through the windshield again, though he still saw the afterimage of the can of gasoline, the crowbar, and the shovels. Especially the shovels. He remembered helping Tommy put them back there, but it was as if he hadn't fully realized what they were going to use those shovels for. It was as if someone else had done it. We had nothing to do with that, he thought, his easily confused mind having difficulty grasping the ugly truth of what they were about to do. We didn't put those things back there, he thought, so none of this was really happening. It had to be a dream. Any minute now, he was going to wake up and find himself back on the ward. The attendants would be coming around soon with their little trays of tranquilizer pills—Thorazine, Mellaril, Haldol, Stelazine—he'd taken them all at one time or another. They were his old friends, the only friends he'd ever really had. Except for Tommy.

This is really crazy, he thought. Really crazy. It was like being in some kind of horror movie with two grave robbers on their way to desecrate the monster's final resting place. It wasn't real. Real people didn't do things like this. Neither did sane people, but they weren't exactly sane, were they? That's what everyone said about us when they put us in that place, thought Hawes, that we're not sane. Not fit to mingle with the normal folks, no, got to lock them up along with all the other crazies where they'll be safe, where they can't hurt themselves or anybody else. Only we're not safe anymore, thought Hawes. *We're out.* God damn, we're really out. But if they catch us pulling this crazy

stunt, they'll lock us right back up again. And this time they may never let us out.

Lightning split through the rolling black clouds, lighting up the old cemetery gates ahead of them. The sign above the gates said, ETERNAL REST CEMETERY. Tommy pulled in as the thunder rumbled. Hawes was not sure if he was more frightened of the storm or of what they were about to do. This is it, he thought. We're driving through the gates of hell. What in God's name am I *doing* here?

Tommy Jarvis was his friend. That's what he was doing there. You did things for your friends, things you wouldn't ordinarily do, because your friends needed them to be done and you had to help your friends. Having a friend meant everything to Allen Hawes, because he never had one before. Even when he was kid, nobody had wanted anything to do with him. He had been different, strange, excitable. At first the other kids had just looked at him funny. Then they started teasing and mocking him. Then they started beating him up. And then they just left him alone, as if sensing on some subliminal level that being alone was by far the worst form of punishment. It didn't change things much when they locked him up inside one ugly institution after another. Being locked out of the real world was nothing new for Allen Hawes. He been locked out as far back as he could remember. But Tommy hadn't locked him out. Tommy hadn't tried to hurt him. Tommy was his friend. *You do things for your friends.*

Tommy slammed the brakes on and the truck skidded to a halt. He turned the engine off. There was a look of fierce, grim determination on his face. This was it. This was what they had been talking about for months. God, thought Hawes, we're going to do it. We're really going to do it.

Tommy opened the door, got out, and walked around to the back of the truck. Hawes didn't move. I don't want to do this, he thought. Man, 1 really don't want to do this, Tommy, please don't make me. But he could not say it out loud. He didn't want to lose the only friend he had. Tommy started to unload the pickup.

Hawes took a deep breath and stared down at the hockey mask he was squeezing in his hands. What the hell kind of person walks around wearing one of these things? he thought. What the hell kind of person *does* the kind of things Tommy told him Jason did? And what the hell kind of person keeps a mask like this, knowing who-or what—had worn it?

He got out of the truck and Tommy handed him the gas can and the tools. Then Tommy took the lantern they had brought, looked at Hawes, nodded as if to say, *Okay, let's do it and get it over with,* and carrying the lantern, started walking down between the rows of tombstones. Hawes followed, afraid, not knowing what else to do.

The storm was very close now. Thunder was crashing all around them. The wind pulled at their clothes. Tommy was walking slowly along the rows of tombstones, carefullly examining each one, holding the lantern up and reading the inscriptions, then moving on. He was looking for one tombstone in particular—the one tombstone Hawes suddenly wished they'd never find.

And it seemed for a while that they wouldn't find it. They kept on looking. Tommy was getting frustrated, his movements jerky and impatient as he dashed from one gravestone to another. He was really wired. We're not going to find it, Hawes thought suddenly, with relief. It isn't here. Tommy was imagining it all. This was just another one of his friend's hallucinations, the visions that had tortured him so much. Allen Hawes knew all about hallucinations. It isn't here, thought Hawes, and Tommy'll see for himself that it's not here and he'll realize that none of this was real and he'll feel better and then we'll just get out of here and leave this all behind us and we'll never talk about it again. And then Tommy stopped, standing very still, bent down over a grave.

No, thought Hawes, it isn't there. I don't want it to be there. He moved closer, looking at the inscription on the tombstone illuminated by the lantern.

"Jason Vorhees—At Rest."

Oh shit, thought Hawes.

Tommy was staring at the tombstone, his eyes wide. A strange light seemed to dance within them. He moved the lantern and looked at the tombstone next to it.

The inscription read, "Pamela Vorhees—Beloved Mother."

Tommy looked back at Hawes and pointed down at Jason's grave. This was the one. Yeah, Hawes thought, with a sinking feeling. Yeah, I know. He gulped and nodded. *You do things for your friends.* He took a deep breath.

"Okay," he said, determined to give it one last try. "There he is. He's dead all right. Let's go."

"I gotta be sure," said Tommy.

They put down the lantern and the gas can and the crowbar and then picked up the shovels. Hawes stood looking down at the shovel in his hands, as if he suddenly didn't know what it was or why it was used. Tommy didn't hesitate. He plunged his shovel deep into the ground, forcing it further into the mound of soil with his foot, and then removed a large chunk of grass and dirt.

Grave robbers, Hawes thought. That's what we are, we're grave robbers. Ghouls. We're going to be damned. We're going to bum in hell. He shut his eyes for a moment, then bent down to the task.

The dirt flew as they worked feverishly. God, thought Hawes, what if somebody catches us at this? Don't cemeteries have grounds

keepers or something? Caretakers or night watchmen or something? Can't we get arrested for doing this? What kind of person gets a job like that? He almost burst out laughing with hysterics. What kind of person gets a job like that—did he really think that? Christ, he thought, what the hell kind of person does what *we* are doing?

It'll be all right, he told himself. It won't really be so bad. We'll dig the goddamn coffin up and Tommy will see that this Jason character is really dead and there won't be any need to go through with the rest of it, with the gasoline… Jesus, what's the body going to look like? How long has he been dead? It's okay, Hawes thought, trying to reassure himself, it's okay, it's going to be all right, I'm not going to let this freak me out. I've seen dead animals before, this ain't no different, there's nothing here to scare you, it's just rotten meat, that's all. Dead meat.

Tommy's shovel struck something hard.

For a second, Tommy hesitated, then he redoubled his efforts, working twice as hard as before, throwing shovelfuls of dirt up out of the grave, exposing the coffin's lid.

Jesus, Hawes thought. He thought of an old movie he had seen on late-night television once, the show with that sexy lady in the black dress that was so tight it looked like it was painted on her skin. It was an old picture called *The Mummy.* The archaeologists were opening up the mummy's tomb and this old Egyptian guy was warning them about the curse. They didn't pay any attention and they started to open up the tomb. And then the movie stopped suddenly and the camera cut back to the sexy lady lying on her velvet couch back in the studio and she said, "Don't do it, you'll be sorry!" And then it cut back to the movie and they opened up the tomb....

Tommy was scraping the dirt off the coffin's lid.

He tossed the shovel up out of the grave and it landed in the pile of dirt they had dug up. He looked up at Hawes and reached out his Hand. Hawes silently handed him the crowbar.

Tommy took the crowbar and reversed it, so that the flat side was facing down, then he drove it into the side of the coffin lid, forcing it in, straining hard. There was a cracking sound Tommy got a firm grip on the crowbar and gave it a hard yank, leaning all his weight on it. With an ominous creaking sound, like nails being pulled out of a crate, the coffin lid cracked open.

Tommy looked back up at Hawes and handed him the crowbar. They stared at each other for a moment and, for a second, Hawes thought he wasn't going to do it, but then Tommy took a deep breath and bent down over the coffin once again. Slowly, as if he were reaching for a buried treasure chest, Tommy slipped his fingers into the narrow crack beneath the coffin lid. Tommy winced and bit down

on his lower lip. He closed his eyes for a moment, then took another deep breath and, with all his strength, he pulled back on the lid, yanking it open.

Lightning flashed and Hawes almost screamed.

The lightning flash had illuminated the horribly decomposing body and the terrifying vision almost made Hawes lose his lunch. The body's head was completely covered with a white sea of squirming, writhing maggots. The wind blew the disgusting stench right up into his face. Hawes clapped his hand to his nose and mouth, feeling his gorge rising.

Tommy climbed up out of the grave. He turned and stared down into it, at the cause of all his madness, at the monster that had stalked his nightmares. His lips began to tremble. He started to feel dizzy. It was all coming back to him. He heard his sister screaming.

*"No, Tommy, no!"*

A much younger, much more frenzied version of himself, a child filled with raging hatred, bent on vengeance, driven to kill, screamed, "Die! Die!"

*Kill it. Kill it!*

His breath came fast. He looked around wildly and saw an old, ruined wrought-iron fence a short distance away. He started moving toward it like an automaton.

"Hey, where are you going?" Hawes said, thinking that they couldn't just leave things like this, they couldn't just leave the grave exposed, they had to cover it up again or somebody might figure out who did it.

Tommy grabbed one of the slim, spear-like posts that made up the iron fence and pulled on it hard, working it loose. It finally gave and he pulled it out, then turned, heading purposefully back toward the open grave, brandishing his weapon. Hawes came running up to him.

"What's that for?" he said, frightened, not sure if he was frightened for his friend or frightened of him. "Tommy, what are you doin', boy?"

Tommy went right past him, ignoring him. Hawes stared after him, openmouthed. And suddenly, with shocking clarity, he saw what his friend was going to do and he shook his head, refusing to believe it. No, he thought, Jesus, no, he's *not* going to—

Tommy had reached the grave and he stood staring down at the rotten corpse inside it, his lips quivering with fury, his eyes wide open, white showing all around them. He raised the iron spear and leaped down into the grave, screaming.

*"You bastard!"*

He plunged the spear down with all his might, driving it deep into the corpse's chest. It went in with a soft, thumping, squishing

sound.

"Oh, shit," said Hawes softly. This wasn't happening. It couldn't be happening. Tommy had gone right off the deep end. What was he going to do now?

Tommy yanked back on the spear, jerking it loose, then rammed it down again, then again and again and again. The force of the blows jarred the body, causing maggots to drop off the decomposing face. The insects scuttled away, looking for shelter as Tommy attacked their grisly meal with mindless fury. Finally, his rage vented, Tommy rammed the spear down for the last time, driving it right through the corpse and feeling it stick in the wood of the coffin beneath it. His chest rose and fell as he gasped for breath. He climbed up out of the grave, feeling suddenly disoriented, sick to his stomach. It felt as if he had awakened from a horrifying dream, a night terror whose frightening images had lingered and superimposed themselves upon his waking vision.

"Boy, he must've *really* messed you over," Hawes said, staring at him with astonishment.

Tommy reached down and picked up the white hockey mask. He held it for a moment, staring down at it. The holes that were part of the mask's design, meant to keep hockey goalies from sweating beneath unventilated plastic, all seemed like evil little eyes, staring back at him. For a moment, it seemed to him as if there actually were eyes behind the eyeholes of the mask, the demented, bloodlust-crazed eyes of Jason Vorhees.

He tossed the hockey mask down into the grave, then he bent down and uncapped the gas can. You won't come back, Jason, he thought, not *this* time. You'll never come back again. It all ends right here. There's enough gasoline here to soak your rotted flesh through to the bone and turn you into one big torch. I'll give you hellfire, you murderous bastard. I'll cook you until there's nothing left of you but cinders. Nothing. And then there won't be any nightmares anymore. I'll be free of you at last. Purged by the flames.

The sky suddenly lit up with lightning and one of the jagged bolts lanced earthward. The spear sticking up out of the corpse acted like a lightning rod, drawing the electricity, and sparks flew as the lightning struck the spear, missing Tommy Jarvis and Allen Hawes by inches as they leaped for cover.

They didn't see the lightning travel down the length of the iron stake impaling Jason through the heart; they didn't see it bathe the body; they didn't see the veins of electricity dancing over the corpse, crisscrossing it, writhing like snakes. They didn't see the decomposing eyelids suddenly flash open.

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Deep within the primitive, reptilian brain of Jason Vorhees, a twisted spark of bestial consciousness returned, ignited by electric fire. The feral eyes, uneaten by the teeming swarm of writhing maggots, as if the worms somehow knew something no one else could know, glowed as if red fires burned behind them. Sluggishly, thought processes revived and ganglia squirmed with shock. Something lived again that had never really died completely.

The inscription on the tombstone said "At Rest," but there was never any rest for Jason. Each time the tortured soul of Jason Vorhees was resurrected from the limbo it had fled to, it came back stronger, meaner, conscious only of the burning hate that had driven all reason from it, hate for the people who had hurt it, hate for everything that lived. It hated being denied the rest it longed for. It was like a wounded animal, attacking everything that came within its reach. It hated life and so it worshiped death, romanced it as if death were a teasing lover who remained forever unattainable. And now it lived again.

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Tommy Jarvis and Allen Hawes uncovered their heads and got up from the ground, looking fearfully at the sky. That lightning had come very, very close. Almost as if it were a punishment from God, thought Hawes. Maybe not a punishment, because we're still alive, but as if it were a warning. He wanted to listen to that warning, to grab Tommy and shake him by his shoulders, beg him to forget this craziness, plead with him to run back to the pickup truck and burn rubber all the way back to the highway. The hell with everything, thought Hawes, leave everything just as it is, we've done enough, let's just get out of here—but he couldn't bring himself to say it. He was afraid. As much as he feared what was in that open grave, even more he feared losing Tommy as a friend. Tommy's friendship was the only thing he ever had that wasn't taken from him and he treasured it as if it were a rare and fragile piece of porcelain to be swaddled in soft cloth and kept close to the heart. *You do things for your friends.*

Tommy went for the spear, fearful that it would attract more lightning before he finished what he had to do. It was still smoking from the blast. He touched it and quickly pulled his hand away. It was hot. He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a pair of gloves. He put them on and touched the spear again. It wasn't so hot that the gloves would not protect him. It felt only slightly warm now. He wrapped his fingers around the spear and pulled, but he had driven it in so deeply that now it wouldn't budge. That wouldn't do. He couldn't chance another bolt of lightning nearly frying him. It would be too

dangerous. He had to finish this thing. He couldn't give up now. He jumped down into the open grave.

He grabbed the spear again and started straining to remove it. Hawes leaned down and spoke in a low, shaky voice, almost a whisper.

"Let's just get the hell out of here," he pleaded, risking his friend's anger. "My heart can't take any more of this."

Tommy ignored him, still straining to remove the spear, unaware that the coprse's eyes were open, staring at him with loathing.

He gave a grunt and yanked hard at the spear. It pulled loose and he tossed it up out of the grave. Now he could finish what he started. He pulled off his leather gloves, not wanting to get them soaked with gasoline, and tossed them up to Hawes. He started to climb up out of the grave.

The corpse suddenly sprang up as if catapulted from the coffin. Powerful arms seized him.

Hawes screamed. And kept on screaming. The thing was dead —*dead*—it couldn't possibly be alive. It was a rotted, moldering pile of meat and it had leaped up and grabbed his friend…

Still screamings Hawes started running.

Tommy panicked and fear triphammered adrenaline through his body as he fought to get away from the rotting corpse that held him in an iron grip and tried to force him back down into the open grave. He managed to pull loose and kick the thing back down into the coffin and then he scrambled out, clawing at the earth, every nerve in his body screaming at him to flee. But even as one part of his mind urged him to run in terror from the unacceptable reality, another part *of him—the part* that fed on hate—overwhelmed the panic coursing through him and screamed, "Kill it! Kill it now! Send it back to where it came from, *burn* the goddamn thing!"

He scrambled for the can of gasoline and wrenched the cap off. He turned around, clutching the red metal container, and saw the corpse rising from its grave. With desperation, he flung the can around, splashing gas on the thing, thinking at least the gasoline would bum the creature's eyes, but still it kept on coming. He dropped the empty gas can and backed away, wildly pawing for the matches as the thunder crashed and then the rain came. It poured down in sheets, drenching him, soaking the matches.

The thing that was Jason Vorhees came at him, eyes burning with hate, the downpour washing maggots off his rotting flesh...

Tommy tried to strike a light, but the matches had been quickly soaked and it was hopeless. He looked up, eyes bulging from their sockets, and the living corpse was simply standing there, as if mocking

him, staring at him with the ravening gaze of a hungry animal. It started to come toward him.

In an agony of desperation, unable tb accept the fact that the wet matches wouldn't light, Tommy Jarvis struck one useless match after another as Jason slowly came closer and closer. And then Hawes appeared from nowhere, brandishing a shovel, screaming hoarsely, swinging it like a pickax and bringing it down with all his strength on Jason's head. No one was going to hurt his only friend, not even a fiend from hell.

The blow didn't even faze the creature.

Jason whipped around, moving with blinding speed, and his arm lashed out at Hawes, fingers hooked like claws. The hand plunged into the chest of Allen Hawes with such incredible force that it went all the way through his entire body, ripping through flesh as if it were only tissue paper, rending sinew, smashing bone, emerging from the back clutching its prize, the still-beating heart of Allen Hawes.

Jason yanked his arm back and the body that had once been Allen Hawes fell back, collapsing like a deflated balloon, falling back into the open grave. It landed in the coffin and the impact jarred the lid loose and it came crashing down, slamming shut the door of the last cell that would ever hold him.

Tommy's nerve broke and he ran.

Seeing Tommy fleeing, Jason quickly looked around, searching for a weapon, driven by an insatiable need to kill before his victim got away. His gaze fell on the iron spear. He bent down to pick it up and then something in the open grave caught his attention.

Tommy fled in blind panic, slipping in the mud, the rain coming down in buckets and soaking him clear through to the skin. He reached the pickup truck and wrenched open the door, leaped inside, and fumbled for the ignition. The big engine roared to life and Tommy mashed the accelerator to the floor. The tires spun, found traction, and the pickup slewed around, gaining speed as it hurtled toward the cemetery gates.

Jason had forgotten about his victim for the moment. The creature that had once been a frightened boy, huddling in the woods like some abused animal, had spotted something that struck a familiar chord. Something registered as "mine inside that twisted brain. Jason pulled on the gloves that had belonged to Tommy Jarvis, dropped by Hawes in his hysterical flight. He reached down into the grave and picked up the object, handling it with reverence.

The white hockey mask had been washed clean by the pouring rain, and beneath the persistent flashes of lightning, it gave off an unearthly glow. As if following a ritual, Jason Vorhees slowly donned the hockey mask. He turned away from the open grave, from the

closed coffin that now held the torn and broken body of what had once been Allen Hawes, and still holding the iron spear, the alchemist's rod that had brought him back to life, Jason started walking toward the cemetery gates. Just as something had been pulling Tommy Jarvis back to the Eternal Rest Cemetery, so something now pulled at Jason Vorhees, something that urged him to follow a blind homing instinct and return to the place where it all started. A voice inside his mind came back to life, commanding him to go back to Crystal Lake and kill again.

# TWO

Forest Green was a quiet, peaceful, boring little town, and Sheriff Michael Garris knew it. What else could you expect from a town named after a goddamn crayon? It was as if they got the name out of a first-grade kid's school box, Garris thought. Sky Blue, Earth Brown, Hot Pink, and Forest Green. Now Crystal Lake, that was a name, thought Garris. It conjured up visions of a man in red hunting plaids, wandering by a lake shore with his Winchester tucked up in the crook of his arm, not much caring if he saw a deer or not, just enjoying the sunlight reflecting off the water and the birds singing in the trees. Maybe he'd settled down by the lakeshore and assemble his fishing rod, not really caring whether he caught a fish or not, either. The idea was just to kick back against a nice thick tree, light up a pipe, stretch out, and enjoy the peace and quiet.

A man could use some peace and quiet after Vietnam. Even after all these years, those memories remained, and that was why he had come here. The name of the town was what had attracted him. Crystal Lake. The words evoked a pleasant daydream. Forest Green just made him think of O.D. Green and he had seen enough of army olive drab to last him for a lifetime. Still, he could understand why the town council changed the name. If Forest Green had unpleasant associations for him, the name Crystal Lake reminded the townspeople of something a hell of a lot more unpleasant.

But all that was over now. People didn't talk about it anymore. They didn't even want to think about it, which was why they had voted to change the name. It was a quiet town again, a nice town, and even if Garris wished sometimes that he had something more to do than just write an occasional parking ticket or warn some teenage kids about getting a bit too rowdy, he wouldn't trade it for any other place. It was a good place for a man to settle down and raise his kids. Better to write speeding tickets and warn kids to keep it quiet than to have to deal with the violence and frustration of a police job in some big city. A city cop never knew when he might have to pull his piece and shoot someone, and Garris had done enough shooting to last the rest of his life.

I can still do it if I have to, he thought to himself as he leaned back in his office chair and put his feet up on his desk. I've still got what it takes. It's not like I'm getting old. I'm not getting old. Just because a man appreciates some peace and quiet doesn't mean he's getting old, dammit.

He frowned. More and more lately, the idea of aging was nagging at him, and he pushed the thought away. He didn't want to think about it. It was just that Megan sometimes made him feel old.

She was eighteen already. God, where did the time go? It seemed like only yesterday that he was dandling her on his knee, flushed with the pride of fatherhood, listening to her squeal with delight as he bounced her up and down. She was almost a woman now. Cute little body, filled out nicely. Too nicely, Garris thought, sourly. He wished that Melanie was still alive. He missed her terribly. It was hard trying to raise a teenage girl all by himself.

He closed his eyes and sighed. No, Megan was a good girl. A little spirited, perhaps, but hell, you've got to expect that from a teenager. So she gave him a hard time once in a while, talked to him as if he were some old fart, but that was just her way. She was just testing the limits, trying the bounds of his fatherly authority. Kids did that, especially as they got older. They pushed you a little and you let them get away with it a little, but then you slapped them down when they had gone too far and it reassured them, it let them know that you still cared. He had done his best by her, and considering the way most kids were acting these days, he really had nothing to complain about. Megan knew what was right and what was wrong. Still, sometimes she made him feel a little old. Why did she have to grow up so goddamned fast? He put his head down and started to nod off.

Tommy's truck came screeching to a stop outside. Tommy leaped from the truck and slammed the door, then ran across the street at top speed and burst into the country sheriff's office like a man possessed, startling Garris, who was out of his chair like a shot, his gun drawn instantly, purely by reflex.

Seeing the gun, Tommy came to a dead stop and quickly raised his hands. "Don't shoot! Please."

Garris had been scared almost as bad as Tommy, but he couldn't let the kid see that. Just a teenager, he thought. Christ, I'm getting jumpy in my old age. *Old age*. There was that thought again! It made him angry and he lowered his gun.

"You in show business, kid?" he said, annoyed. "You sure know how to make an entrance."

Seeing the gun go down galvanized Tommy Jarvis into action and he rushed toward the sheriff, the words spilling out of him. "You gotta do something! Jason's alive! He's killed my friend and now he's coming after me!"

Garris relaxed, but remained cautious. He didn't know this boy. Just some hyped-up kid, he thought. Probably knocking off some kind of prank his buddies put him up to, but then again, maybe he was juiced up on something. You could never tell with kids these days. It wouldn't do to have any kind of drug problem in Forest Green. He didn't want Megan mixed up with anything like that. Parents these days had to be extra careful.

"Now you better cool out a minute, boy," Garris said, sitting back down, asserting his authority. "You already almost got your head blown to pieces."

If this was some kind of screwy kid trying to show off for his buddies by playing a big joke on the law, better let him know right now that this kind of stuff didn't go down in Forest Green, thought Garris. On the other hand, if this kid was high on something, better to cool him out and then pat down his clothes, see what he might have hidden in his vehicle.

"Will you listen, dammit!" Tommy shouted at him.

Garris stood up. Enough was enough. This kid was going to start showing some respect. "Don't piss me off, junior. Or I *will* repaint this office with your brains." You had to let these kids know what was what, he thought. He wondered who this boy's parents were.

Tommy tried to bring himelf under control with visible effort. He hadn't come here to antagonize this man. He had to make him understand. "Jason is *alive*" he said. "We dug up his body. I was gonna cremate it and—"

Garris started to chuckle. So that's what this was all about. Christ. Kids! Some of them'll think up the damndest things....

"Hold it. Whoa... What's your name, son?"

"Tommy Jarvis. We gotta do something, Sheriff. He's even more powerful now that—"

Garris quickly came around his desk. The name had triggered off a memory. "Aren't you the kid whose mother and friends were—"

"Yeah," Tommy said, interrupting him, hoping desperately that he was finally getting through to the man. "Jason murdered them and —"

"And you've been at some psychiatric clinic ever since, haven't you?" said Garris, watching his face carefully.

Tommy saw what the sheriff was thinking and he spoke quickly. "Yeah, but they released me because—"

The door banged open suddenly, shocking them both. Tommy almost jumped out of his skin, but it was only the deputy, Rick Colone, carrying an armload of fast food. He had kicked open the door because his hands were full. He was younger than Garris, in his mid-thirties, and he was considerably shorter. He saw the surprise on their faces and grinned apologetically.

"Sorry," he said, a little sheepishly. "I didn't—"

Garris waved him in. "No problem, Rick." He smirked. "Come over and meet a former resident here, Tommy Jarvis. He's got some kind of prank going about—"

Tommy lost control. "There's no *time* for this bullshit!" He looked around wildly, panicking, desperate to convince these men that

it was not some kind of joke. All of them were in grave danger. His gaze fell on the weapons rack, and without thinking, he bolted toward it and grabbed one of the rifles, pulling it from the rack. "Jason's got to be stopped!"

Grabbing for a gun in the presence of two cops was not the smart thing to do. Colone dropped the food and both he and Garris lunged for Tommy, who compounded his mistake by struggling to hold on to the rifle. They wrestled for a moment and then Colone pinned Tommy's arms from behind and Garris yanked the gun away.

He was furious. A joke was a joke and you had to give kids a little leeway, but this was too much. He tried to control his temper as he clenched the rifle in one hand and pointed at Tommy with the other.

"Now that's what's known in the books as screwin' the pooch," he said, a hard edge to his voice. This kid was going to get taught a lesson, right now. He turned to Colone. "Iron this punk." There's nothing quite like TV police dialogue to really shake up a kid, Garris thought.

Tommy struggled to get away from the deputy, but Colone held on to him and wrestled him across the floor, throwing him into the holding cell. The iron bars slammed shut.

"No," said Tommy, realizing his mistake too late, "no, please, you gotta listen! Jason's coming back here! He's after me. I tried to destroy him but I fucked up—"

"You got *that* right," Garris said.

His temper cooled somewhat and he realized that perhaps this wasn't something as simple as a juvenile prank. The kid had been in a psychiatric clinic, after all. He was clearly disturbed, but that was not at all surprising after what had happened to him. He didn't know why in hell they had let him out if he was still disturbed, but they were letting out all kinds of fruitcakes these days, sometimes for no other reason than because their insurance had run out, and why hold on to a welfare case when you can collect the bucks off some other loony's policy? Still, that wasn't his responsibility. His job was to keep the peace in Forest Green and he wasn't about to have some wacked-out kid running around and upsetting people, much less grabbing guns! All right, count ten, he told himself. Come down on him, but don't come down too hard, the poor kid's had enough of a rough time already. He leaned in toward the cell.

"Now *you* listen up. I'm sorry for what happened to you and your folks years ago. But no one in Forest Green wants to be reminded of what that maniac did here. That's why we changed the name. People want to forget that this was once Crystal Lake. And they don't need some kid stirring up that Jason shit again."

Tommy knew that he had gone too far, but he could not calm

himself down. They didn't understand, he thought, they just don't know. He started to pace the cell, trying to pull himself together. This was no time to lose his cool. He had done enough damage already. Suddenly his fury over his inability to get through to them broke loose again.

"Why didn't *you* cremate him?" he said, accusingly, as if it were their fault.

Garris tried to keep his patience, but he was rapidly losing it. "They were going to," he said, thinking that if he could humor the kid a little, maybe he could calm him down. One thing he didn't need was some screaming meemie leaping around like a maniac inside the holding cell all night. "But some asshole sent a lot of money to give Jason and his mother a decent burial. Now look, you just lie down and get some rest. In the morning, I'll call that clinic and see if they—"

Tommy grabbed the bars of the cell, as if he could force them apart with his bare hands and get at the sheriff and somehow make him understand. Suddenly he realized that there *was* a way. "If you'd just go to the cemetery," he said, "you'll see I'm not lying."

Garris had no more patience with him. "Either you go to sleep or I'll come in there and put you out," he said.

"You're gonna be sorry you didn't listen to me," Tommy said defiantly.

"You're gonna be sorry if you don't shut the fuck up," said Garris. Christ, he thought again, what the hell do they let 'em out for if they're still screwed up? If it wasn't the middle of the goddamned night, he'd drive the kid back over to the clinic himself. All I wanted was a little peace and quiet, he thought. Damn kids.

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The rain had stopped, but the back roads around the town of Forest Green were a quagmire. The headlights of a battered old Volkswagen Beetle bounced up and down as the tiny car jounced along the rutted road, its little engine working overtime. Mud splashed the fenders as it negotiated the wet road. Inside the car, two young people in their mid-twenties were slap-happy from their long trip and the late hour. They were lost and the girl who was driving giggled as her boyfriend did his best to read the spread-out map in the dim light from the single bulb behind the cracked plastic dome light lens. The car struck a pothole and bounced hard, making the boy's head strike the inside roof. The girl burst into a fresh spasm of giggles.

"Will you slow down?" said Darren, giving his girlfriend, Lizabeth, an irritated look. "It's hard enough to read this thing."

Lizabeth bit her lower lip, trying hard not to laugh. "Well, who was it who told me to take this cow path?"

"You admit the sign *did* say CAMP FOREST GREEN, with an arrow pointing this way," Darren said.

Lizabeth giggled. "I admit nothing without talking to my lawyer."

Darren threw down the map in disgust and gave her his impression of Officer Mick Belker's growl. "So much for the head counselors ever finding the camp on their own. I say we stop the car, get out, and start screaming for help."

The car came to a halt as Lizabeth hit the brakes.

Darren, still looking at her, sighed. "I was just kidding, Lizabeth."

But Lizabeth wasn't laughing. She was staring nervously out through the windshield. Darren turned to see what she was looking at. Standing in the middle of the road, motionless in the glare of the headlights, was a man wearing some kind of crazy mask, a hockey mask, of all things. He was holding an iron spear.

"Darren, we'd better turn around," said Lizabeth, clearly afraid.

"Why?" said Darren.

"*Why*? Because I've seen enough horror movies to know masked weirdos are never friendly," Lizabeth said.

She started to back up, but Darren suddenly grabbed the wheel.

"Wait!"

By reflex, Lizabeth hit the brakes. The car just missed rolling off the road and into a water-filled ditch. Another few inches and they'd have backed right into it. Darren looked behind them, then at Lizabeth.

"There's no way we can do this," he said. He looked back toward Jason, who was still standing motionless in the middle of the road, blocking their way. "If the car drops into that gully, we'll never get it out."

Lizabeth couldn't take her eyes off the figure standing in the center of the road.

"Do you have any alternate suggestions?" she said, swallowing hard and trying to keep her fear from showing. She wasn't succeeding very well.

Darren looked toward Jason and bit his lower lip. "Yeah," he said. "We're gonna scare him."

"*We're* gonna scare *him*?" said Lizabeth.

Darren wasn't about to acknowledge the fact that he was also scared. It was the middle of the night, they were lost in a maze of paths and endless woods, on a back road God only knew where, and there was some kind of weirdo just standing there in the center of the road, holding a dangerous-looking iron spike and wearing a hockey mask. And they were trapped between that character and a gully full of water from the rain. Scared? Yeah, he was plenty scared, but he

couldn't let her see that.

"That's right," said Darren, trying to pump himself up, to convince himself that he was in control of this spooky situation. "Just drive toward him," he said confidently. "He'll move. Nobody wants to die."

"That's a freakin' fact," said Lizabeth. "Least of all us."

"Just drive," said Darren, trying to sound as if he knew what he was doing. "He'll get out of our way."

Lizabeth shook her head, not knowing what else to do but listen to him. I'm not really going to do this, she thought. I'm not really going to try to run some weirdo derelict over in the middle of the road and then just drive off into the night as if nothing had happened. But Darren seemed to know what he was talking about and what he said seemed to make sense. The guy would move. He'd have to move. Unless maybe he was drunk or something. Still, drunk or not, there was that nasty-looking spear thing that he was holding and she didn't think it was a walking stick. She took a deep breath, shifted into first, raced the engine for a moment, and then let out the clutch and stomped down on the accelerator.

The little Bug leaped forward, chugging toward Jason like a tiny locomotive. He didn't move a muscle.

He's not going to move! thought Lizabeth, terrified of hitting him. Her foot came down hard on the brake pedal. The Volkswagen skidded to a stop on the wet road, its front bumper inches away from Jason's legs. The staring eyes behind the white hockey mask drilled them in the glare of the headlights. Lizabeth turned to the suddenly-less-than-confident Darren.

"Yeah, that really scared the shit out of him," she said sarcastically, trying to fight down her fear.

Darren became angry. He leaned over and blasted the car horn.

In reply, Jason swung his spear and smashed out one of he car's headlights.

"Oh, Jeez," said Darren, shocked by the sudden violence of the reaction.

Lizabeth grabbed the gearshift lever. "That's it. We're driving this baby back to town—*in reverse*."

Darren's shock turned to anger at the assault against his car. He grabbed Lizabeth's hand as she started to shift.

"The hell we are!"

He opened up the little glove compartment and pulled out a small twenty-two-caliber revolver.

Lizabeth stared at the gun with disbelief. This wasn't the Darren that she knew. "Where'd you get that?" she said, shocked that he

would have a gun, but at the same time feeling suddenly relieved.

"Don't worry about it," Darren said, getting out of the car. He was still afraid, but now he had the gun. A spear was no match for a gun; the guy would see that and back off and that was all he wanted. He had no intention of shooting anybody. "Just stay cool," he told Lizabeth, working up a tough-guy tone, trying his best to sound like Eastwood. Quiet. Firm. No nonsense. In control.

"Stay cool?" said Lizabeth, suddenly alarmed at the prospect of her boyfriend brandishing a gun at someone. What the hell would they do if it went off and killed the guy? The smart thing to do was get back in the car and drive away, *now*. "You ain't no Dirty Harry. Now stop it!"

Darren fought his panic. It's okay, he told himself, I've got the gun. That puts me in control. He held it out before him in both hands, crouching slightly like he'd seen the cops do on TV. He cleared his throat, something no movie or TV hero ever did, but it would spoil the effect if his voice cracked.

"All right, scumbag," Darren said, relieved that his voice didn't come out sounding squeaky. "Get out of the road!"

Jason stood before him, motionless.

Darren licked his lips and pulled back the hammer with his thumb, wishing that the sound was louder and more menacing and that the little gun looked more intimidating.

"Now!" he said.

Jason's response was to ram his spear into the other headlight. The one remaining light went out and now he was a dark figure standing in front of the car, looking even more menacing Lizabeth screamed.

"Darren! Get in here right now! He'll kill you!"

"Not if I get him first," said Darren loudly. He was the one with gun. He was going to show this backwoods crazy he meant business. And suddenly, unexpectedly, the dark figure charged him, moving with amazing speed. For a split second, it didn't register. Darren was holding a gun. Nobody charges someone holding a gun. And then he realized what was happening and fired, but it was too late, the bullet either missed or had no effect and the last thing Darren saw was the iron spear being thrust at him.

Lizabeth screamed with hysteria as she saw the spear enter her boyfriend's body. Effortlessly, as if Darren didn't weigh a thing, the killer lifted the impaled body on the spear and tossed it aside into the bushes. It landed with a soft, wet plop. And then the murderous gaze turned on Lizabeth.

The girl fumbled for the gearshift lever in a panic and then saw something coming toward her through the windshield. She lunged across the other seat as the windshield shattered in a rain of glass and

the iron spear rammed into the driver's seat where she had been a split second earlier. Terrified out of her mind, Lizabeth scrambled out the open door on the passenger side and fell into the gully, dropping down with a loud splash into the muddy water.

Jason pulled the spear out of the harpooned Volkswagen and went around the car, pursuing the hysterical girl.

Lizabeth struggled to get to her feet in the muddy gully, but she slipped and fell back into the water, twisting her ankle. She floundered like a drowning swimmer and looked back over her shoulder. The breath caught in her throat as she saw the killer coming toward her with his spear poised. Trying to run was hopeless. Lizabeth pawed madly through her pockets, desperately trying to think of something with which to barter for her life. Whimpering, she pulled out her wallet, containing all her money for the summer and her credit cards.

"Don't kill me, please," she said, crying. "You can have these."

She looked up.

The killer had disappeared.

She stared into the darkness, amazed. What happened? Where did he go? She looked around. There was no sign of him. She heaved a deep, sobbing sigh of relief. It didn't matter. What was the difference where he went, she was safe, she wasn't going to die—

As if dropping from the sky, Jason slammed down into the water beside her. Lizabeth opened her mouth to scream, but the sound never came out. The iron spear came down and plunged right through her open mouth, driving her head back, shattering her teeth, ripping through her throat and vocal cords, crunching through bone.

Jason stood over his victim, head bent, staring down at the girl's corpse floating in the filthy water. The head had been driven down into the mud like a butterfly pinned to a board and blood bubbled up around the spear. The money and the credit cards fell from the lifeless hand and Jason's gaze followed Lizabeth's American Express card as it floated down the bloody stream. For a moment—but only a moment—the burning rage consuming him subsided. Then the awful hunger flooded through him once again, and the tormenting voice inside his ruined mind began screaming for more blood. No rest. There was never any rest. He had to kill them all. Especially the one who had awakened him. Jason looked up from the body and back toward the road. Tommy's pickup truck had gone down that road. Jason began to walk.

# THREE

Jason Vorhees lumbered slowly, purposefully, through the damp woods, keeping up a steady, inexorable pace. He had not slept. Jason Vorhees never slept now. For a while, as his body had moldered in the grave, there had been rest, unconsciousness, sweet oblivion devoid of feelings or awareness. But deep within him somewhere was a thing that never died—a power shaped by raw emotions and a hunger for revenge, a primordial animating force that wouldn't let him rest, that kept him forever moving. He was like a shark swimming in deep and ancient waters, driven only by a deep-seated instinct to devour. He had dim memories and fragmentary visions of a life before he had become the driven creature feared by all. Memories of what was, in some respects, a normal childhood.

It was normal in the sense that he had once eaten and slept and performed all the normal functions of a human child. He had once had normal feelings. He had a mother and a father, parents who loved him, albeit in a strange and twisted way. There had been nothing terribly remarkable about his birth, save that it occurred at the stroke of midnight on Friday the 13th. He had been premature and Pamela Vorhees expelled him quickly, a short labor and an easy birth, as if her uterus was anxious to surrender him. The doctor barely arrived in time. They never made it to a hospital. Jason had been born in his mother's bedroom and when the doctor held the infant up and slapped him, Jason hadn't made a single sound. Other than that, it was a normal birth.

He had been a very quiet child. Even while he was inside his crib, he never woke his mother in the middle of the night and there had been no need for her to get up at four A.M. to soothe her crying baby. Sometimes, Pamela Vorhees had been concerned about her child's silence. She would occasionally wake up for no reason, in the middle of the night, hearing nothing from her baby's room. She would leave her bed and tiptoe silently to Jason's crib, feeling a need to check on him, to make sure he was all right. And she would find her baby quietly on its back, its eyes wide open in the dark, staring coldly up at her. Even as a child, Jason Vorhees never smiled.

He did not cry when his first teeth came in. He did not cry when he fell down and skinned his knees. He did not even cry when the yellow jacket had landed on his palm and stung him while he was lying in the sun in their backyard. He merely closed his little fist and crushed the life out of the offending insect.

For a while, everyone had thought he was mute, but medical examinations proved that there was nothing physically wrong with him. Jason could speak; he simply didn't want to. He made all his teachers

feel uneasy, though they could never say just why. In school, he did all the things he was supposed to and he seemed very quick to learn, but he would never answer out loud when he was called upon in class. Instead, he would carefully write his answers down upon a piece of paper and hand them to his teachers silently. One teacher, a young and eager woman who taught him in the third grade, had gone out of her way to try and make him speak, and finally driven to frustration, she took him by the shoulders, shaking him, demanding that he answer her. Jason said nothing. He simply stared at her, not blinking, his young eyes boring into hers like the twin turrets of an anti-aircraft gun locking on a target. She let him go, backing away from him, feeling her skin crawl and shivers running up and down her spine. The next day, she gave her notice without any explanation, packed her things, and moved out of town.

Autism, said the school psychologist. Precursor of schizophrenia. But autistic children simply did not respond. They did not write messages. They did not listen carefully when they were spoken to. They did not respond at all to outside stimuli. The muteness had to be hysterical, the baffled school psychologist suggested, seeking some logical explanation. It had to be some strange form of withdrawal, brought on by some early trauma, perhaps even at birth. Yet there had been no traumatic experiences in the young boy’s life and the birth had been an easy one. But there had to have been some sort of trauma, the psychologist persisted in saying. The boy refused to talk. There had to be a reason. In exasperation, after spending hours trying to get Jason to respond, the psychologist finally turned on Jason, screaming at him, "I *know* you can talk, you little freak! You *can*, can’t you?"

And in a firm and very quiet voice, Jason had said, "Yes."

The psychologist became tremendously excited, convinced that he had made a breakthrough, but Jason never said another word. And for years thereafter, the psychologist had nightmares for which he had no explanation, dreams in which everyone around him opened their mouths to speak to him, but no sound at all came forth. Hysterical deafness, his colleagues said when they examined him, while the psychologist stared at them wildly, putting his hand to his ear and shouting, "*What? What?"* repeatedly, screaming at the top of his lungs. They shook their heads sadly and gave him a quiet room to scream in.

The other children shunned Jason and complained about his "creepy eyes." There was actually nothing at all unusual about his eyes, except that he never seemed to blink. The bravest and the biggest of the bullies in the school had tried to pick a fight with him once, feeling his prestige at stake. Jason was much smaller than the bully was and the bully had been confident of his superior size and

strength. He goaded Jason, teasing him unmercifully, and when the verbal abuse did not provoke any reaction, the bully struck Jason hard, hitting him in the face with his closed fist.

The blow seemed to have no effect at all. It did not even make Jason blink. He simply stood there, staring at the bully, who swallowed hard and backed away, retreating from the smaller boy's unblinking stare with dread, and two days later, an ambulance came to the bully's home and took him to the hospital. He had taken his right hand, the same hand he had struck Jason with, and jammed it down into the kitchen drain. Then he turned on the garbage disposal. Neighbors a block away heard the boy's agonized screams. Yet no one could ever get the bully to say why he had done it.

And then there was that summer at the camp, Camp Crystal Lake. For Jason, those were the most vivid memories of all.

Jason did not understand what had happened to him. His mind had snapped so many years ago that what was left of it had no conception of why he couldn't seem to rest. He could not eat. He could not sleep. He could not die. His continuing existence was a never-ending agony of relentless hate and hunger, a hate that could not burn itself out and a hunger for blood that could never be appeased. If only he could sleep. For a while, there in the grave, inside the coffin, there had been rest. Quiet, peaceful rest in the warm earth. Rest that had been rudely interrupted. As the sun came up and sent its rays down through the tree branches overhead, Jason kept on moving, strange disjointed memories and fragmentary visions flashing through his ruined mind. One vision in particular stood out among all others and Jason focused on it, burned it deep into his primitive consciousness. It was the vision of Tommy Jarvis with his hands upon the iron spear.

***

The sounds of a door slamming and young voices talking excitedly and laughing woke Tommy Jarvis and, for a moment, he could not remember where he was. Then, as he came fully awake, he remembered the horrible events of the preceding night and he knew that none of it had been a dream. He sat up on his cot inside the holding cell and looked out through the bars.

It was early morning and Michael Garris had returned to the sheriff's office in the company of four teenagers, three girls and a boy. One girl, Sissy, was black, sexy, and vivacious, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old. The other kids were white. The girl called Paula looked a little punky, with short, spiky hair died jet black and earrings in the shape of upside-down crosses. The boy, Cort, was an obvious headbanger, with long hair and a heavy-metal T-shirt. But the third girl, the one holding on to the sheriffs arm, was the one who caught

Tommy's attention. She was beautiful, about eighteen, with long, lovely legs, gorgeous hair, and a smile that seemed to light up the entire room. He heard the sheriff call her Megan.

"Come on, Dad," Megan said, cajoling him. "You could have Rick drive down Cunningham Road and look for them."

"Megan," said the sheriff, "my deputies have more important things to do than look for camp counselors with car trouble."

"Sheriff," said the boy with the rock 'n' roll T-shirt, speaking with affected cool, "couldn't you, like, put out an all-points bulletin for them? That would be really wicked decent."

Garris gave him a sour look.

"It's just that Darren and Lizabeth are in charge of organizing and setting up the new campgrounds," said Paula, the girl with the new-wave haircut.

"All the little kids arrive today," said Sissy anxiously. "We're not ready to deal with that alone."

Garris sat down behind his desk and picked up the telephone. "Look, I sympathize with you kids," he said patronizingly. He shrugged. "The best I can do is call the station in Carpenter and have them keep a lookout for them."

"I got a bad feeling about what might've happened to them," Tommy said.

Everyone turned to look at him where he stood just inside the cell, gripping the bars. His eyes connected with Megan's and she held his gaze.

"You've got to convince the sheriff to go look for your friends," he said, thinking that perhaps he could convince the father through his daughter. Garris obviously did not believe him. But then again, how could he? It sounded crazy. Somehow, Tommy had to make the man believe. He had to get through to the sheriff before it was too late. From the conversation that the kids were having, he realized that the camp was about to open for the summer. *The* camp. Jason's camp. If something had already happened to their friends.,.

"Hopefully, they're fine," Tommy continued, "but there's a very good chance that Jason—"

Garris jumped to his feet angrily. "Shut up!"

Megan came toward the cell, looking at Tommy with interest. Her father hadn't mentioned that he had a prisoner in the holding cell. He always talked about things like that when he got home from work, but it was seldom that anything worth talking about happened in Forest Green. If he had locked somebody up the night before, she wondered why he hadn't mentioned it.

"Jason who?" she said.

"Megan, get away from him!" said Garris.

"He’s dangerous!"

Megan heard her father, but she didn’t acknowledge him. This boy certainly did not look dangerous. In fact, he looked kind of cute. And her father was always warning her about cute boys. She knew what *that* was all about. Boys are only after one thing, her father always told her. Whenever he started that routine, she would smile at him sweetly and say, "Is that what you were after when you were a boy, Dad?" It was funny, seeing him blush. He always failed to come up with a good answer. "It was different then," he would usually say, but he never explained how. Still, just to be on the safe side, she stopped a few feet away from the cell, well out of the boy’s reach.

"I’m not dangerous, believe me," said Tommy sincerely. "Jason is out there. He’s looking for me. But there’s every possibility he’ll return to the camp where it all started."

Garris swore under his breath and came around from behind the desk to stand in front of the holding cell. "I told you to shut—"

"You mean *the* Jason of Camp Blood?" Sissy said uneasily.

"Yes!" said Tommy.

"No!" said the sheriff. He turned to the kids. "You kids better leave. This boy’s not well and I need to talk to him in private."

"But, Dad," said Megan, "we—"

Garris interrupted her, speaking very firmly. "Megan, take your friends back to the camp. I’ll let you know if I hear anything about your camp leaders."

Megan stared back at her father defiantly for a moment, clearly not wanting to leave and obviously anxious to find out what this was all about, but Garris stared her down. She had seen that look before. It was the look that said, "This far, Megan, and no further." It would not be a good time to argue. She took one more look at Tommy and then smiled sweetly at her dad.

"Don’t beat him up too bad," she said flippantly. "He’s kinda cute."

Garris clenched his teeth. "Megan, leave!"

The kids left the office awkwardly, intimidated by the big sheriff, but Megan casually turned on her heel, gave her dad a hipshot and slowly walked toward the door with a cool, insolent, and sexy swagger, mostly for her father’s benefit. He hated it when she acted sexy; it drove him absolutely up the wall. But she also knew that he noticed it every time, and she always chuckled to herself, thinking, Feeling a little guilty, Dad? She knew he wasn’t really thinking anything improper, but he was a man and he couldn’t help but notice it when she forcibly reminded him that she had grown into a woman. She knew he often wished that he could have his baby girl back and she didn’t want to hurt his feelings. But sometimes it was necessary to remind him that

she wasn't a little girl anymore and that it wasn't fair to treat her like one. The little gesture of defiance was mostly for his benefit, but at the same time, she knew the boy inside the holding cell was watching.

The moment she left the office, Garris turned on Tommy furiously. He wasn't going to have this nutcase upsetting people in this town, least of all his own daughter. It was past time to slap this crazy kid down once and for all.

"I was going to call the clinic and have *them* collect your ass," he said, "but I don't want you around here any longer, poisoning my daughter or anyone else with your warped sense of humor."

"They have to be warned, Sheriff," Tommy said, pleading with the man. The sheriff already had his mind made up about him. How could he possibly make him see the truth? But he had to try. He had to. There must be a way, he thought desperately. "Jason *will* return to the area that's familiar," he said. "No matter what you call it, it's still Camp Crystal Lake to him."

Garris walked away from him in disgust, not willing to listen anymore. His patience was being strained to the breaking point. I've given this guy all the slack he's going to get, he thought. You try to be patient with these damn kids, you try to give them a break, but they just keep on pushing, like they want you to lose control and slap them down.

Well, he wasn't going to let it get to him. He had enough headaches with Megan acting up lately, insisting on wearing those tight clothes that showed off her body, flaunting herself, using too much makeup, trying to grow up before her time, and teasing him whenever he said anything about it—*teasing* him, her own father, giving him those pouty looks and hipshots, knowing how he hated it when she did things like that.

He knew what she was doing. Damn kid's trying her wings, he thought to himself. Hell, she's a good girl, but she can see what she looks like in the mirror, she knows what she's got and she's just trying it out, seeing what it can do. It wasn't as if she was actually going to do anything, but the trouble was that she didn't seem to realize what that sort of trashy behavior implied. He noticed the way she had stood when she was talking to this kid, that "Hey, what do you think of this?" stance, and it made him furious. Perhaps it was only harmless flirtation, but the thought of her in the backseat of a car with some young punk, his hands all over her... He strapped on his gun and reached for his coat.

"We're gonna escort you and that shitpile pickup of yours to the edge of my jurisdiction," he said. He picked up his rifle. "Then we'll say good-bye and we'll never see your ugly mug around here again." For dramatic emphasis, he cocked the rifle. "Right?"

Tommy pushed off the bars in frustration and started pacing in the cell as if he were a caged animal. It was useless. He felt utterly impotent before this redneck sheriff with his macho bullshit. Big man, he thought, threatening a teenager in a cage with a rifle. A tough guy with all the answers—he knew the type. He was so furious he could have taken that rifle and smashed its butt into the big man's stomach, knocking the wind right out of him, pinning him to the floor, and *making* him listen.

No, keep your cool, he told himself. Maintain. You won't get anywhere with this guy by bucking his authority. That's what he wants. It's the only thing he understands. He obviously loves to be proven right so he has an excuse to act like a tough cop. That would only justify the way he thinks about kids, Tommy thought. Nobody could tell this guy anything, least of all a kid like me. Kids didn't have any answers, according to this guy; parents did. Christ, this guy was actually a parent? How did an asshole like this ever wind up with a daughter like Megan? She must take after her mother. God, but she was beautiful, and what a pretty name. And the way she walked out of here was sort of pretty, too, he thought. No wonder the sheriff had a thing about kids. He must go apeshit every time a boy walks past the house. With an effort, Tommy forced his thoughts away from Megan and back to his own, much more immediate problem. So the sheriff was going to run him out of town. He almost laughed. Jesus Christ, he thought, what a fucking John Wayne mentality. And then he realized that being escorted out of town was just the answer to his problem. It looked like there was a way to get through to Garris after all, and the redneck cop might be handing it right to him.

***

There was a rustling motion behind a large, thick clump of bushes. The stirring stopped and everything was still for a moment. Suddenly the bushes parted and a little man wearing eyeglasses and army-surplus fatigues stuck his head out like a frightened rabbit. He looked quickly to either side of him, eyes wide and anxious, covered with protective goggles worn over thick glasses. He had camouflage makeup on his face, but he looked more like a nervous, mud-spattered little boy than a combat soldier. He peered all around again, quickly, jerkily, then plunged back into his hiding place behind the bushes.

Not far away, two men dressed in army jungle fatigues, goggles, and camouflage makeup stalked through the forest, watching for any sign of movement, their handguns held ready. They weren't really handguns. They were compressed-air pistols that fired red paint cartridges that splattered when they hit the target. The paint blotch was a way of confirming the "kill." And the two men weren't soldiers—at

least not combat soldiers. They were soldiers in the corporate army, buinessmen decked out for the occasion like Sly Stallone on an impossible jungle mission. Their soft physiques were a far cry from Stallone's chiseled musculature, and unlike Rambo, who could move like Tarzan through the jungle, these two moved more like outdated Sherman tanks, making enough noise to alert a dozen armies to their presence. However, they doubtless thought that they were stalking their prey silently and they were confident of an easy kill. The little man with glasses was no match for them, either in the office or out here.

"Once we nail Roy," said Stan, mustering up his best tough guy imitation, "that's it. Victory is ours."

"This is taking forever," said Larry, the heavier of the two, speaking in a whining tone. "I'm starving."

"That's your problem, Larry," Stan said harshly. "That's why your sales are always below quota. Your instinct to eat is stronger than your instinct to win."

Larry bridled at the comment, fed up with the stupid game. He didn't see how the hell this was supposed to make a guy a better salesman. All this talk about "developing a fighting edge" and "nurturing the killer instinct" and all that bullshit—what a load of crap. This game was a ridiculous thing for grown men to do. They were playing cowboys and Indians in the woods, for God's sake, stalking each other with paint guns. He felt like a fool, and what made it worse was Stan giving him a hard time about it all, riding him and putting him down at every opportunity. He had taken just about enough.

"You're a real ass, you know?" said Larry.

"Better than being all ass," said Stan.

Larry couldn't understand what had gotten into Stan. He was taking the whole thing far too seriously. Of course, he wasn't taking it anywhere near as seriously as Burt. Christ, Burt had gone right off the deep end with this thing. He had always been that way, going all out in everything he did—in the office, even in the bar during happy hour when he would hit on all the secretaries—but especially out here, where all of a sudden he had turned into Chuck Norris, complete with a machete, a survival knife, and those wicked-looking things he had called "devil darts." Burt was a little scary. But Stan was his friend, and right before his very eyes he had turned into a real jerk. Larry simply couldn't understand it.

"You know, you become an entirely different person when you're out here, Stan," he said. "And I don't like it."

"Hey," said Stan arrogantly, "this is a *man's* game. Requiring a man's cunning and a man's intelligence—"

A figure exploded out of the bushes right in front of them, startling both men, frightening them. Before they could react, the air

pistol coughed twice and each man was struck squarely in the chest by red paint pellets, splattering like blood. Both men looked down at the dripping paint spots on their chests in disbelief, then they looked up at the woman who stood before them. She was also clad in jungle fatigues and was wearing protective goggles over her eyes. Katie raised the air pistol's barrel to her lips and blew away imaginary smoke.

"With the woman's touch," she said, grinning.

"Now, wait a second!" Stan protested. "I thought Burt shot you!"

Katie did a model's turnaround for them. "See any paint?" she said, grinning. She was pleased with herself. These two turkeys had it coming. "Sorry, guys," she said, "I did in Mr. Commando, weapons and all. Survival is the name of the game and that flag is mine."

As the trio walked away, they were completely unaware that they were being watched. And even if they'd known, they could never have imagined that the watcher was playing a very different sort of game.

"I can't believe it," Larry said, looking down at his paint-splattered fatigues, both upset at having been "killed" by Katie, but also secretly relieved that it was over now. After a whole day of stumbling around in the woods, he was really hungry. Still, it wouldn't do to give Stan any more reasons for giving him a hard time about it. He pretended to be upset about being out of the game. "Burt never gets hit. We never should've let her play."

"It's a damn company executive game," said Stan bitterly, "and she's a damn company exec."

Katie stepped between then. "Now, now, boys," she said, amused by their immature attitude, finding it funny that everyone was taking this so seriously. "Don't be spoilsports. Put on your headbands."

Reluctantly, they reached into their pockets and pulled out the black headbands with the white letters spelling out the word "dead," the headbands that identified those players "killed" in combat.

As they dragged their heels through the woods, Jason watched them intently. Then he moved to follow them, stalking his prey silently, about to turn their corporate game into a real struggle for survival.

***

The freshly painted and beautifully renovated cabins of Camp Forest Green gleamed in the bright sunlight. Crystal Lake, though no one ever called it that anymore, gave off shimmering sparkles of light, like bright blue gleaming bands of mylar. Everything looked beautiful and new, free from the taint of its violent past. Nothing shocking could happen here. This was a peaceful place, soon to be filled with the playful laughter of small children. The neatly painted boats were all moored at

the wharf, waiting to be rowed out upon the placid lake. The camp equipment was all bright and shiny, ready for the summer games. All that was missing were the head counselors, Lizabeth and Darren, who should already have arrived, but still showed no sign of turning up.

"I'm getting worried," Paula said as she helped her friends carry boxed supplies from their car to the kitchen.

"About Jason?" said Cort, the headbanger, a smirk upon his face. He wasn't at all worried. He was cool, he was mellow. Hey, no hassle, just a nice and easy summer watching a group of little kids and scoping out the local female talent. At the end of it he'd have enough money to pick up the black Gibson Les Paul guitar he'd been lusting after all winter.

"No," said Paula, ignoring his sarcasm. "I'm worried about Darren and Lizabeth. They should have at least called. Don't you think? Megan?"

Megan's mind wasn't on the conversation. She was drifting, thinking about that boy back in the holding cell. He had been upset, that much was clear, but he had also seemed sort of nice. He didn't look at all dangerous to her and she didn't believe he was, no matter what her father said. He had nice eyes. She wondered what her father had arrested him for. Sometimes she thought her father would like to arrest every teenage boy in town, just to keep them away from her. God, the man is *smothering* me, she thought. I just can't handle it!

She knew he loved her and that he meant well, but sometimes he just made her want to scream. He had bought her that new car when she graduated from high school last spring—a bitchin' bright orange Camaro. She had thought, At last he's finally starting to treat me like a grown-up, but she soon realized why he had picked out that car and in that color—not because it was a bitchin' color, but because it stood out like a sore thumb from all the other cars in town. All his deputies would know it was her car so they would be able to spot it from a mile away and radio her whereabouts in to Sheriff Daddy. It was bad enough to have her father checking up on her all the time, but to bring the whole Forest Green Police Department in on it as well was simply too much. And especially that Rick Colone, who was always looking at her tits. *God*, the man was sleazy!

"Megan!"

"Huh? Yeah, what?"

Sissy giggled. "This girl's back in that cell with her prisoner of love."

Megan gave her a playful glance. "What's it to ya?"

"Don't be playin' with no crazy jailbird," said Sissy, affecting an experienced, jive-ass street tone. "Those dudes are bad news."

"Yeah?" said Megan. "How would *you* know?"

"Hey, I been around long enough," said Sissy. "To see plenty on TV."

Everyone laughed and Cort emitted a theatrical groan.

"I don't know," said Paula dubiously. "He seemed pretty weird with all that Jason stuff."

"Yeah," said Cort, grimacing, "he was *really* into it."

"Maybe he was telling the truth," said Megan innocently, keeping a straight face.

Everyone stopped and stared at her. Megan played it out.

"Just because our parents keep telling us that Jason was only a legend doesn't mean it wasn't true," she said. "What if Jason did come back here looking for those counselors who caused him to drown when he was a boy? Searching for the one who decapitated his vengeful mother..." She paused, her tone heavy with mock drama. "And you know what today's date is, don't you?"

They stood there, staring at her, not certain if she was serious or not. Suddenly, Megan looked past them, as if seeing some horrifying vision just behind them.

"There is only one thing even more terrifying," she said, making her eyes wide.

"What?" said Cort nervously, suddenly afraid to turn around and look to see what she was staring at.

Megan suddenly stretched out her arm and pointed behind them at the big yellow bus that was turning into the camp gates. The bus pulled to a stop and the door slid open, disgorging a horde of screaming youngsters. The counsellors stared at the swarming mass of small children with dread, pretending to be horrified by the vision.

"I think I'd rather deal with ol' Jason," Sissy said.

# FOUR

The razor-sharp machete came down hard and sliced into the heavy brush, hacking away at it with a vengeance. Burt was taking his frustration out upon the bushes, childishly attacking them as if they were his mortal enemies. Unlike the other players of the survival game, Burt actually thought he looked the part of a commando, but he was really just a Hollywood version of one. He looked as if he had just stepped out of the jungles of Southeast Asia—or the leafy foliage of a studio back lot—his camouflage makeup artfully applied, his well-built figure filling out the combat fatigues. He was a tall, good-looking man, even bearing a superficial physical resemblance to Stallone, something he realized and played upon. He had practiced that little lip-dropping sneer in front of the bathroom mirror until he had it down pat, and he had learned the walk, that half roll, half swagger of the bantam rooster, the easy gait of a man who was always in control.

He had prepared for this game for hours, painstakingly applying the camouflage makeup, getting the look just right. He knew the look was important, whether in business or in the singles bars or out here in the woods. It made no difference; a man had to *look* like he knew what he was doing. Image was everything. People judged you on your image. If a man's got the image of a winner, he's going to be a winner. You act as if you take your natural superiority for granted, Burt thought, and everyone else accepts it as being the way things are. Looking good was the name of the game. Like what's-his-name, the comedian, always said, "Better to look good than to feel good."

But looking good hadn't been enough this time. He had gone to a ridiculous amount of trouble just to apply the perfect look—the commando belt with the machete and sheath, the devil darts, the Jimmy Lyle survival knife (Christ, that fucking knife alone had cost a fortune)—and none of it had helped. He had counted on the gear to psych out the competition, but now here he was, paint-splattered and wearing a "dead" headband, knocked out of the game, and by a goddamned broad, no less.

"Stupid damn game," he said, hacking away furiously at the bushes. "Dumb bitch. She tricked me. Guys are gonna be laughin' about this for months."

Blind with rage, like a small boy throwing a temper tantrum, he raised the machete high to slash it down again, but a leather-gloved hand suddenly clamped onto his wrist with an iron grip, stopping the machete in midswing. Shocked, Burt spun around to see who had grabbed him, ready to deck the bastard, but he gasped and froze when he saw the wild, staring eyes behind the hockey mask.

Jason whipped Burt around by his arm, jerking him so hard that

Burt felt as if his arm was tearing loose from its socket. There had been no time to cry out, no time to struggle, no time to do anything but register the image of the jagged, broken tree branch coming toward him impossibly fast; he was being hurled right at it; it was coming at his chest... he opened his mouth to scream—

Burt's body slammed into the broken tree branch with a sickening crunch. The jagged limb ripped through his chest, punching a huge, gory hole in it. As he came up against the tree trunk and smashed into it, his momentum stopped along with all his life functions. His head rolled aside limply, revealing a happy face that someone had carved into the tree trunk.

Jason picked up the machete. Burt's arm was still attached to it. He pried open the dead fingers and let the bloody stump drop to the ground.

***

Martin moved slowly down the rows of tombstones, swaying slightly, his eyes glazed and out of focus and his nose veined with thin red streaks, the ruptured capillaries of alcoholism. He was an old man on his last legs and all he wanted out of life now was a warm place to sleep, a little food once in a while (when his stomach could keep it down), and nobody bothering him. And of course, a fresh bottle of good old Wild Turkey every now and then, to offset the cheap red wine he drank by the gallon jug—Chianti, port, rose, or burgundy. It didn't matter what brand he drank, only what was on sale at the time.

The job as caretaker of the cemetery had been made to order. He didn't even have to make an effort to appear sober. He could perform his simple duties drunk. Maybe not falling-down drunk, as he was much of the time, but there wasn't much to do and he could handle it. He thought of it proudly as "My Job," a position of responsibility in the community. So what if people weren't exactly friendly when he came into town. It didn't matter; they didn't seem to mind him much so long as he remembered to take a bath once in a while. On some level he knew he smelled bad, the sweet-sour stench of booze came out from every pore, but he wasn't conscious of it. He figured it was time to take a bath whenever Joe down at the liquor store wrinkled up his nose while handing him the bottle wrapped in a paper bag. Things could be lots worse, thought Martin as he stumbled along, fulfilling his responsibilities by checking on the graves. At least I've got a job. "My Job." Allows a man to buy a drink once in a while. Life could be lots worse.

He suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, swaying like a willow in the wind, steadying himself by leaning against one of the monuments, his red-rimmed eyes wide, staring at the worst thing that

could happen.

"Oh, shit," said Martin, groaning. "Shit! *Shit!*"

Before him was a dug-up grave, dirt piled up all around it, the shovels still lying there where the vandals had left them, the coffin clearly exposed.

He took a pint bottle of whiskey from his coat pocket, uncapped it, and took a big slug from the bottle, wincing and wiping his mouth with the back of his wrinkled, liver-spotted hand. This was a disaster. It was just the sort of thing he was supposed to prevent. It must have happened last night, during the storm, while he had been in an alcoholic stupor on his filthy bed in the caretaker's shack. My job, he thought. Oh, God, my job, they'll take my job away for this. They'll kick me out and then what'll I do—where will I go? How will I survive?

"Ohhh, why me?" he said, supporting his weight against the tombstone and hanging his head down. And then a worse thought occurred to him. "I know he's gonna blame *me* for this."

He stared down at the gaping grave with dread, horrified at the thought of losing his precious job, of being cut off from income, which meant being cut off from booze. Christ, he'd go crazy; he'd start shaking with DTs and climbing the goddamn walls, screaming like an animal. He remembered only too well what that was like and he simply couldn't ever face it again. But even more than that, he was afraid of what would happen when *he* found out.

"He ain't gonna find out," said Martin feverishly.

He looked around quickly, just to make sure no one had seen it, and with desperation he began to throw everything back into the grave. All the evidence of vandalism went flying in—the lantern and the crowbar and the gas can. He saved one of the shovels to fill the grave in when he was done. Make sure you get everything, he told himself. Don't leave a single goddamned trace. It's got to look like nothing ever happened. He started to shovel earth onto the coffin, having no idea that there was a different body in there now.

"Damn," he said. "Why Jason? Mothers coulda had their pick of any of these other graves..."

The earth fell down onto the coffin lid with a soft, thumping sound. Martin suddenly noticed that a foot was exposed, sticking out of the casket. He started to shake.

"Shitheads couldn't even stick him back in right," he said, not even wanting to think what they had done with him. Fucking kids, fucking, goddamned sick kids. "Well *I* ain't gonna touch the slimy sucker."

The sweat began to pour off him, sweet-sour sweat, alcohol dripping and running from his pores. Martin's breathing became labored as he worked frantically, terrified that someone would see him

before he had finished covering it all up.

"He can't find out... He'll think I ain't doing my job... I need that money. He *won't* find out."

He paused in his efforts, gasping for breath, looking around fearfully. He felt his overstrained heart slamming away inside his chest. "No one's gonna know. I need my money..."

***

Tommy's truck sent up a swirling cloud of dust as he drove down the forest road, anxiously watching his rearview mirror. Sheriff Garris and his deputy were still back there, following closely in their patrol car. Just hang in there, Sheriff, Tommy thought. Just stay right there on my tail. Make sure I leave town now.

Garris watched the pickup truck ahead of them through the windshield. He shook his head.

"It's kind of frightening to think that a kid like that can go so far over the edge," he told Colone. "Jason really screwed up the poor sonofabitch's mind."

"He *really* believes Jason's still alive, doesn't he?" Rick Colone said, his jaw slack with amazement.

The thought of that kid being a crazy made him nervous. He had heard about what crazies could do. He thought the sheriff was being way too easy on him. Fucking crazies, he thought, you can't give 'em any slack, no slack at all. You have to drop 'em before they go right for your throat. He knew all about crazies. He had read all those books they sold in the drugstore, scary books with dripping letters on the covers, books all about crazies.

Garris nodded. "Yeah, he really does seem to believe it. But that's not what worries me. It's how far he'll go to try and prove it."

Tommy kept looking up into the rearview mirror. He smiled grimly. That's it, Sheriff, he thought, stay right with me. Make sure this crazy kid gets his troublesome ass the hell out of your town. Just a little farther now, and then you'll see just how crazy I am. And you'll find out what trouble's really all about.

***

Roy was one of the last survivors in the game. The little man floundered in the woods like a small fish thrown onto the shore. This was clearly not his element, as evidenced by his jumpiness, the scratches on his face from running into branches, and the rips in his uniform from crawling through the brambles. His glasses were askew behind the goggles and his ill-fitting fatigues were soiled and muddy from the numerous falls he had taken as he fled from "enemy soldiers,"

both real and imaginary.

He ran from tree to tree, like a character in a cartoon, imagining all sorts of unseen terrors lurking in the woods all round him. He wished they hadn't made him play this game. He was never any good at games. The Survival Game—hell, he was never going to survive. What chance did he have? I'm going to get killed, he thought, I know it. I'm going to get killed for sure.

He thought he heard a noise so he burst from behind the tree where he had been hiding. He sprinted toward another hiding place, but his foot caught in some vines as he ran and he tumbled to the ground like Charlie Chaplin taking a pratfall. The paint pellet gun went flying from his sweaty grasp. Panicking, Roy got to his hands and knees and started scrambling in the leaves, desperately searching for the gun. This is it, he thought, frantically throwing leaves up into the air as he searched for the gun. God, this is it. I'll never find it. I'll never find it, but they'll find me and I'll get shot and that'll be the end of that, just one more humiliation to put up with. God, where is it? They're coming. I just know they're coming and they're going to get me. I can feel it. I can feel someone watching me right now. I'm dead...

Katie entered the blackened forest clearing with her "dead" prisoners and carrying the other team's red flag. This was the area they had selected for the rendezvous, the burned-out clearing where someone's campfire had gone out of control some time ago and now everything was crisped and charred. The green was only starting to return. "The Fire Zone" was how they had referred to it during game orientation. Fire Zone, indeed, thought Katie, vastly amused by the whole thing. Big boys playing little boys' games, legitimizing the whole thing by cloaking it with the lingo of corporate psychology. "Honing the killer instinct," really! What would they think when it turned out that the one with the most so-called "killer instinct" was the only woman in the game? She was going to enjoy rubbing it in.

"Let's go, you guys!" she shouted as they entered the clearing. "The game's over!"

"You don't know for sure," said Stan in a disgruntled tone. There was still Roy. Hell, he'd even rather have a nerd like Roy win this thing than suffer the humiliation of being beaten by a woman. She would be insufferable now, throwing this up in their faces for months. Damn emasculating bitch, thought Stan. Jesus, she was never going to let them live this down. "What about Roy?" he said. "Nobody's seen him."

"Of course not," Katie said, grinning at him, loving every minute of it. "If he hasn't already pelleted himself, I'm sure he's lost."

"Yeah," said Stan, "but the game's not over until it's over."

"That's right," said Larry, going along with it, wanting to get

back in Stan's good graces.

"Shhh," said Katie sharply. She cocked her head, listening. "Wait a second. What was that?"

All three of them froze, listening very intently. Maybe it was Roy, creeping up on them. Come on, Roy, you fucking wimp, thought Stan. Pellet this cocky broad or we're all going to be miserable.

They waited.

Roy, thought Stan, if you're hiding under some rock or something, shoot her and let's have done with it already.

The silence lengthened.

"Ahh, nothing," Stan said, disgusted.

Katie frowned. "I could swear I heard—"

Jason rocketed down from the tree branches high above, slamming to the ground directly in front of them. He was wearing Burt's commando belt with all its weapons. The machete whistled from its sheath and whipped savagely through the air in one sweeping, vicious slashing stroke.

The three corporate commandos never had a chance to make a sound. Their heads dropped off their necks, tumbling to the ground like rotten apples, followed by their collapsing bodies. Jason watched them fall, fascinated as he always was by the phenomenon of death, the one experience he always sought and never could attain. He heard another sound after the collective thump of the bodies, and he looked up quickly. His gaze fell upon a frightened, pathetic little man standing at the far end of the clearing.

Roy stood numb with shock and paralyzed with fear, staring at the masked killer. He could not believe what he had just seen. His three coworkers had been decapitated with one stroke. The killer had come from nowhere and he had attacked them without reason, moving with such blinding speed and with such hellish fury that there wasn't even time for the shock to register.

Roy, an insignificant and frightened little man, a creature who had never experienced any real violence in his life, was now faced with violence so mindless, so shockingly brutal, so terribly sudden and inexplicable, that his mind simply couldn't cope with it. He saw it, but it didn't fully register. It couldn't possibly have happened, he thought, his responses still sluggish with shock. My God, their *heads* came off, their bodies sank to the ground like marionettes with their strings cut, spouting fountains of blood. He had never seen so much blood in his entire life.

And then the mind-shattering reality descended upon him as he realized that the masked killer was coming after *him*, moving stealthily toward him, staring at him with those wild demon eyes, hypnotizing him like a snake immobilizes its prey with its feral, never-blinking gaze.

The machete was dripping blood onto the ground as the inhuman force drew closer.

The breath hissed out of Roy as if someone had punched him in the stomach; the spell was broken. He did the first thing that occurred to him. Without thinking, he raised his gun, forgetting that it wasn't real, and fired at the killer. The paint pellet struck Jason squarely in the chest. He stopped, momentarily confused, and stared down at the red blotch of paint, then he slowly looked up at Roy, his homicidal gaze boring into his helpless quarry.

Roy turned and ran, slipping in the leaves, miraculously regaining his balance, thinking only of escape, imagining that gory blade slicing through his neck as if it were a stalk of celery. The useless paint gun fell from his small hand as he fled for his life, aware that the masked killer was relentlessly pursuing him. Tears welled up in his eyes, and his breath came in gasping, whimpering sobs. He was experiencing real terror for the first time in his life. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw the killer coming, machete raised for that final, agonizing stroke.

"Oh, God!" screamed Roy, appealing to the empty woods. "Help me! Somebody help! He's trying to kill me!"

But there was no help. Roy was the last survivor in the game. And he had never been any good at games.

***

The sign marking the exit said ETERNAL REST CEMETERY. Tommy saw the turnoff coming up and glanced quickly in the rearview mirror. The patrol car was still right on his tail. All right, Sheriff, he thought, now we'll see who's crazy. As the pickup truck drew level with the turnoff, Tommy swung the wheel hard left and the truck slewed around in a cloud of dust, tires sliding, spinning, biting into the road surface. As Tommy mashed down on the accelerator, the truck shot down the road leading to the cemetery.

"Fuckin' A, what'd I tell ya!" Garris shouted inside the patrol car. He smashed his fist into the dashboard. "Hit the noise and cherries!"

Colone turned on the siren and the flashing lights as the patrol car skidded around the turn, accelerating after Tommy's battered pickup. Tommy heard the siren and set his jaw, determined to brave it out. He couldn't stop now. The sheriff would never listen to reason. He hadn't listened yet and he certainly wouldn't now. His only chance was to stay ahead of the patrol car, make the two cops follow him right into the cemetery and chase him down so they could see the open grave of Jason Vorhees for themselves. He floored it.

"I'm getting real tired of this maniac," said Garris through clenched teeth.

"Maybe we'd better call that psychiatric clinic," Colone said nervously.

"Better call an ambulance first," Garris said coldly. He was through playing around with this kid. All right, son, he thought, I tried to give you every break, but you just wouldn't listen, would you? You called the tune. Now you're going to pay the motherfucking piper.

The patrol car accelerated hard, gaining on the pickup. Tommy fought the wheel, continually glancing up into the rearview mirror, knowing he couldn't let the sheriff's car pull up beside him and around him, cutting him off. It was all or nothing now. He had to make it to that grave.

He slammed on the brakes as the truck drew even with the cemetery gates and he was out the door before it stopped, racing through the gates toward Jason's grave. The patrol car screeched to a sliding halt behind him and Garris and his deputy leaped out and sprinted after him.

Tommy looked desperately for Jason's grave among the rows of tombstones. Dammit, where was it? This had to be the right area. He glanced quickly all around him, running aimlessly, unable to understand why the open grave was not instantly visible—and then he was knocked off his feet and slammed to the ground with a piledriver force as the massive Garris hit him with a flying tackle.

Shaking with fury, Garris breathed hard from his exertions as he bent Tommy's arms up behind his back to cuff him. The boy struggled against the large, powerful man.

"I gotta show you Jason's grave!" Tommy gasped.

"I've seen it," Garris said.

"Please, Sheriff," Tommy begged. "You'll see we dug it up."

Garris snapped on the bracelets, cruelly ramming the rachets tight against Tommy's wrists. He got to his feet and yanked the boy up as if he were a rag doll. Gripping him tightly with one beefy hand, he pointed toward one of the plots just ahead of them.

"You dug it up, huh? Well, he must've got chilly in the night and pulled the dirt back over."

Tommy stared at the grave Garris was pointing out and blinked. It was Jason's grave. It was only about fifteen yards away, yet from that distance, it was impossible to tell that the grave had only recently been refilled. The chunks of lawn had been carefully replaced and tamped back down. From where they stood, it looked as if the grave had never been disturbed. It wasn't possible. They *had* dug it up. Jason *had* come out of it. He'd *seen* it!

"No," said Tommy, shaking his head, refusing to believe it. "That's not right. Somebody covered it back up." He lunged away from the sheriff. "I gotta see it!"

Garris jerked hard on Tommy's arm, yanking him back. Deputy Rick Colone had seen enough. Christ, he thought, we've cuffed the damn kid and still he's fighting! Fucking nutcase. There's only one way to handle crazies. He drew his gun out of its specially made holster. It was a Smith and Wesson .357 Magnum revolver with a laser scope attached to the frame. He had read about the laser scope in a magazine after seeing it in some film. He had wanted to get a Colt forty-five semi-automatic long-slide, but Sheriff Garris had drawn the line at the laser scope.

Colone was a young cop, predictably overzealous and fascinated with firearms. Garris understood that, but he wasn't going to have any of his officers carrying a cannon like a forty-five Colt long-slide. In a quiet town like Forest Green, chances were Colone would never even have to use it, but if something should occur that required his deputy to fire his piece in the line of duty, Garris didn't want any forty-five-caliber slugs flying around. The forty-five was a heavy, relatively slow-moving round, nowhere near as fast as a .357 Magnum slug, but because it was a big, heavy bullet, it delivered a devastating punch on impact. Hit a running man in the arm with a forty-five-caliber slug and you'd knock him right down. The only trouble was, you'd also ruin the arm. A leg wound from a forty-five slug could easily require amputation, if the victim didn't bleed to death first.

Garris was a tough cop, but he wasn't a butcher. A .357 Magnum slug could easily go right through the person you were shooting at and kill an innocent bystander, but with a .357 revolver, you could also load thirty-eight-caliber bullets, the standard police load. Only the gun itself was much larger—and more intimidating—than a thirty-eight-caliber revolver, so Garris had allowed the laser scope and the .357, so long as Colone loaded only thirty-eights. It made the deputy happy and it gave him a big, scary-looking gun without him becoming a walking menace to the community. The sheriff carried a .357 himself, but he was a veteran who knew and understood firearms. Colone had never served in combat and he was inexperienced on the streets. Garris figured he'd grow out of his childish fascination with the laser scope, which would make a lovely little red light for an armed perpetrator to aim at in the dark, but now, for a change, he was glad that Colone was carrying his high-tech toy. It would give him a chance to put the fear of God into this kid. Nothing else had worked.

"Now see what you've done," said Garris. "You've made my deputy draw his revolver. That could be a *serious* headache for you, son. He's been dying to try out his new mail-order laser scope."

Colone aimed the revolver right at Tommy's head and the laser scope sent a tiny, bright red beam lancing out toward Tommy's forehead. Colone wanted to squeeze the trigger more than anything,

but he hesitated. The kid was cuffed, he told himself. It'll look really bad if I shoot a prisoner who's already been cuffed. The truth, however, was that the prospect of actually shooting someone had hit home and suddenly he felt scared. This wasn't a paper silhouette, but a living, breathing human being. There was a powerful, queasy feeling deep down in his stomach and he swallowed hard, trying to keep his uncertainty from showing.

"That's a damn impressive piece of high-tech weaponry," Garris said, making his tone deadly, not only for the kid's benefit but for Colone's as well. He had instantly recognized the subtle signs of his deputy's nervousness. He had seen it before, years earlier, in Vietnam. That's right, Rick, he thought, that is what it's all about. This ain't no movie. This is what it's like when you point your piece at another human being. Better you should learn it now, with a prisoner who's safely handcuffed, then learn it when you're throwing down on someone who's armed and can shoot back.

Tommy stared fearfully at the large bore of the weapon pointed at him. He had instantly stopped struggling.

"Wherever that red dot goes," said Garris, hammering it home, "a bullet is sure to follow."

"What's the problem, Sheriff?" Martin called, running up to them with a shambling gait.

Garris quickly whipped Tommy around and Colone hastened to holster his revolver. Shit, thought Garris, that's all I need, someone seeing us getting ready to assassinate a handcuffed prisoner. Belatedly, he realized that was how it would have looked. He also realized, with something of a shock, that Colone just might have pulled the trigger. And there was a part of him that had actually been hoping that he would.

"Nothing, Martin," he said, trying to sound as if nothing out of the oridnary had happened. "It's all right. Just a vagrant kid. We got it under control."

As they dragged him away, Tommy looked back over his shoulder at the old alcoholic caretaker. "Who covered up Jason's grave?" he demanded.

Martin froze.

"*What?* What are you talking about?"

Garris pulled Tommy back to the patrol car. "Don't concern yourself, Martin," he called back to the old caretaker. He didn't need the old boozer spreading this all over town. "This boy needs treatment. We're taking care of it. Sorry for the disturbance."

"Jason's not in his coffin!" Tommy screamed in desperation. "Hawes is! Dig it up! You gotta dig it up!"

Martin stood motionless, watching as Tommy was shoved into

the back of the patrol car. The deputy got into Tommy's pickup and followed the sheriff as he pulled away from the cemetery gates.

Martin swallowed with difficulty and reached for his trusty bottle. He tipped it up to his lips and emptied it, then let his breath out in a heavy, wheezing exhalation. "Dig it up?" he mumbled. He snickered, half with relief and half with hysteria. "Hell, he must think I'm half a bubble off."

He looked down at the grave of Jason Vorhees, seeing the traces of shovel marks where the sod had been carefully replaced. Nobody'll ever know, he told himself. Nobody. A few more days and it'll all settle down and grow over better. Nobody will ever be able to tell that it had been dug up in the first place. It'll be okay. I ain't gonna lose my job. Not for nobody. And he'll never find out.

***

Sissy and Paula sat on the steps of the counselor's cabin in Camp Forest Green. A short distance away, between the cabin and the lake, were two large picnic tables underneath a canopy of overhanging tree branches. Megan was standing in front of the tables, supervising a large group of noisy, enthusiastic little girls.

"And then after that," Megan was saying cheerfully, establishing a rapport with her young charges, "we'll swim, hike, and have lots of fun together, okay?"

The kids gave her a loud, happy chorus of cheers and Sissy looked at Paula and gave her the "gag me" take—sticking her finger down her throat and miming retching. Paula stifled a laugh and gave Sissy a playful punch. She looked around.

"What happened to Cort?"

"Are you ready?" Sissy said, setting up the straight line. "He's taken the young men off to teach them my favorite sport."

Paula smirked and went for it. "Which is?"

"Boy scouting," Sissy said throatily.

Paula burst out laughing at the thought of Cort playing the role of scoutmaster. "You gotta be kidding!"

At the same time, on a forest path not far away, a twelve-year-old boy was echoing her exact words, saying them with pained, exaggerated sarcasm.

"You gotta be kidding!"

Cort was kneeling on the path, positioning two rocks on top of one another. He was surrounded by a group of bored-looking young boys, not yet in their teens, all standing around him with their arms folded, body language saying clearly that they were entirely too hip for this sort of childish nonsense. Cort was trying hard and doing his best to fill in for the still-missing Darren, who undoubtedly would have

handled this much better. The trouble was, he was only a few years older than these kids and they knew it, so it was hard to come across as any kind of authority figure, which wasn't really his trip anyway. They were giving him a hard time. He gave it another try.

"No, seriously," he said. "The Indian scout would arrange the rocks in such a way that, like, only his fellow Indians would know, you know, which way he went." He looked up at them. Death. No response. A couple of the kids rolled their eyes. "You know?" he repeated anxiously.

Teyn, the twelve-year-old who had spoken sarcastically, leaned close to one of his little friends and said, with juvenile sophistication, "If this is as exciting as it gets, we're in big trouble, dude."

Cort heard the comment and pretended to ignore it. He looked down and pressed his lips together. Like, hey, he thought, cut me some slack, kid, all right? Excitement? What do you want, to go cruising for the little girls? It's a fuckin' summer camp, man, and you're fuckin' twelve years old, okay? Get real. This is as exciting as it gets. He grimaced. Where the hell was Darren?

***

Jason moved through the darkening woods like a juggernaut, holding the bloody machete in his hand, wearing Burt's commando belt with the survival knife and devil darts attached to it. As if following a radar beacon, he kept moving toward the wooded territory around Crystal Lake.

The rotten flesh of his body should have long since disintegrated in the earth, but even as it had lain dormant in the grave, attacked by worms, it had resisted the efforts of the maggots to devour it, like a stubborn plant refusing to submit to blight. Now, revitalized by a hellish jolt of electricity, it regenerated quickly. Cells repaired themselves. Worm-eaten flesh began to grow together. Muscle tissue reformed, coming back denser and stronger.

Jason understood none of this. Had he not been driven by such inexorable bloodlust, had his mind not snapped, he might have wondered about the phenomenon of his continuing existence. They killed him, and yet he did not die. Each time, he came back. Each time, his flesh resisted the process of decay and repaired itself. Each time, he came back stronger, meaner, more indestructible, the fires of his hate rekindled until they burned like an apocalyptic conflagration, incapable of ever being quenched.

From birth, he had been different. From early childhood, others had somehow felt his alien nature, sensed the predator within him and withdrawn in fear. No one would ever discover what it was about the boy named Jason Vorhees that made them feel as if someone had

walked upon their graves each time his never-blinking eyes gazed at them.

Jason had felt that he was different, but he had not known how or why. It had never occurred to him to wonder why he never became sick, or why the superficial injuries of childhood had always healed so quickly. He had never broken any bones, so no doctor ever had an opportunity to see the superhuman process of his bones mending faster than any normal human bones could ever mend. Even his mother, Pamela, hadn't realized the full extent to which her son was different. True, he was unusually quiet and intense, but she had taken it for granted that he took after his father. She had simply been happy that she had a healthy child.

The events following her death had been so horrible that no one wanted to acknowledge them, much less question how and why they had occurred. The few terrified people who had known about what happened, the few who had survived, did not want any explanations. They only wanted to forget.

Jason would never forget, just like he could never die. He could never forget the sight of his frenzied mother, driven insane with grief, murdering to avenge her son, whom she thought dead. He could not forget the vision of her decapitated head, eyes fluttering, blood spouting, mouth open in a soundless scream... It all centered around the place he knew as Camp Crystal Lake. Camp Blood. The blood that could never wash away the horror, no matter how much of it was shed.

Jason glanced down at the thick slime coating the machete. Red blood, like his mother's, bright and slick, the scarlet fluid of life, precious, beautiful…

***

Garris screeched over onto the shoulder of the interstate. Deputy Rick Colone pulled in behind him in Tommy's pickup truck. Garris got out of the patrol car and opened the back door, pulling Tommy out roughly. He spun the boy around and slammed him up against the cruiser. He reached into his pocket for the key to unlock the handcuffs. He unsnapped the cuffs and whipped Tommy around hard, grabbing him by his shirt and pulling him up close. He spoke in a low, hard voice. It was the voice of the drill sergeant who'd nearly killed him in boot camp; the guttural rasp that still haunted him in his nightmares.

"Like the sign says," Garris croaked, "you're now leaving Forest Green. Don't forget to buckle up."

Tommy stared back at him coldly. The man is trapped by his own stubborn stupidity, Tommy thought. He'll never listen. He can't. His world is nice and ordered, everything fits into the proper slot. I fit into the delinquent-kid slot. The sheriff can't take any shit from

delinquent kids and anything I tell him just amounts to giving the man shit. He's just a badge and a gun; take those away from him and he's just another asshole. So now the badge and gun make him an asshole with power, but his power will be no match for Jason. Jason will rip that badge right off and feed it to him.

Garris saw the rebellion in Tommy's eyes and shook his head. There is no reasoning with this kid, he thought. He's too far gone. Garris smirked as he realized Jarvis was one kid who couldn't go far enough, so long as the direction he was heading was away from Forest Green. Let him be someone else's headache.

"You've been damn lucky, kid," Garris said. "With all the grief you've caused me and my partner, you should be leaving this town wearing your balls as earrings."

Rick Colone walked over and slapped Tommy's car keys into his hand. Tommy looked down at the keys, then back up at the smiling deputy. It was not a friendly smile.

"I think we should do it to him anyway," Colone said.

Garris leaned close to Tommy and tapped his earlobes with his index finger, remembering how some guys back in Vietnam used to cut the ears off gooks and keep them as souvenirs. He had never done it himself, but he could understand it. You can only push a man so far, he thought, and then things get real heavy. A kid like this would never stop pushing.

He looked at Tommy and he thought of all the other kids, the ones with the long hair and the peace signs who spat at him when he returned from Vietnam and called him a baby killer; the ones too gutless to go and serve their country; the ones who hated the world so much they had to take drugs so they could handle it; the ones so morally corrupt that they would screw like animals, anyone and anytime; the ones who always looked at Megan as if she were a piece of meat and they were hungry dogs. He forced the thought away. At least this fucked-up kid would never get anywhere near his daughter again. He'd see to that.

"Naw," said Garris, as if he had actually given some serious consideration to hanging Tommy's balls up on his ears—and suddenly he wasn't sure he hadn't really been ready to do it. "But if we ever see ole Tommy again, you can guarantee it."

They walked away from him and climbed back into their patrol car, satisfied that they had scared the troublesome punk off once and for all. But there was something that scared Tommy more than any redneck lawman ever could. He waited, watching them drive away, and as the patrol car disappeared down the highway, his face took on a look of stubborn determination. He rushed back toward his pickup truck, jumped inside, and rammed the keys into the ignition switch. The

big V-8 motor roared to life and Tommy floored the gas pedal, spinning the wheel around hard, sending up a spray of dirt and gravel. The truck screeched around and peeled out, back onto the highway, back toward the town of Forest Green. The sun was going down. And Jason liked the dark.

# FIVE

Fog hung over Crystal Lake like a gently billowing curtain of gossamer. The campgrounds were quiet and peaceful. The fire had died down to softly glowing embers, and the little campers had all been tucked away in bed inside their cabins, where they had dozed off to the lullaby of crickets. It was a warm night and a slight, comfortable breeze blew through the open windows of the counselors' cabin as Paula and Sissy sat at a folding card table playing Clue. Somehow they had managed to get through the first day without the senior counselors. Sissy was munching from a huge bowl of popcorn as she rolled her dice and moved her game token across the board. Paula kept looking out the window, hoping to see a Volkswagen Beetle driving up. There was still no word of the two head counselors, Darren and Lizabeth.

"Okay, okay," said Sissy, completing her move. "I suggest that the crime was committed in the bedroom, by Colonel Mustard, with the knife."

Paula's mind wasn't really on the game. She grabbed a handful of popcorn. "Oh, come on, Sis. I'm tellin ya', we can't play Clue with just two people."

"Why not?" said Sissy. "I used to play it alone. I love murder games. Have you ever played The Consulting Detective?"

"No," said Paula, feeling ill at ease and fidgety. Even if Darren and Lizabeth were lost, surely *someone* should have heard from them by now. If they'd had car trouble, you'd think they would have called. "Did Megan say when she was coming back from her… visit?"

Sissy grinned. "Of course not. Wanna bet she took him a loaf of bread with a saw hidden in it?" She smiled and shook her head. "I still don't get it. Why him? I mean, he's cute all right, but…"

"Isn't that enough?" said Paula with a giggle, momentarily distracted from her worries.

Sissy laughed and nodded. "You're right. And for this area, that even makes him overqualified."

Paula reached for the phone. "I'm gonna call her. Hopefully, her dad has found out what's happened to Darren and Lizabeth." She started to dial the number for the sheriff's office. "I say if they're not here by morning, we send all the kids home. We're not prepared to run this place all by ourselves."

A child's terrified scream rang out through the quiet campground, shattering the stillness of the night.

Both girls froze, staring at each other wide-eyed. Paula slammed down the phone and shot out the door with Sissy racing close behind her.

The scream had come from the little girl's cabin. They ran up to

the steps and took them two and three at a time, yanking open the door and bursting inside. As they entered, a frightened little girl dressed in pajamas came running up to them.

"She saw a monster!" the little girl said.

"Who did?" said Paula.

The little girl pointed to a cot, where a nine-year-old was huddled up against the wall, curled into a ball. Her big blue eyes were filled with tears and she was shivering.

Paula approached the cot and bent over her. "Hi," she said, softly, reassuringly. "Everything's all right now. We're here."

"Yeah," said Sissy, a bit unnerved. "We're here."

Paula crouched down beside the little girl's cot. "So what happened?" she said, gently.

"There was this monster," said the little girl, struggling to hold back her tears. "He was after me. He wanted to kill me."

"Where?" said Sissy.

"Everywhere."

Paula smiled. "You mean you had a bad dream."

The little girl shook her head violently. "No, no, he was real. Like on TV "

Paula pressed her lips together, trying not to chuckle. She reached out and gently wiped away the little girl's tears and tucked her back under the blankets.

"Okay, listen... what's your name, sweetie?"

"Nancy," said the little girl, sniffling.

"Well, Nancy, I'm Paula, remember? And this here is Sissy, and we're gonna be right out there all night so nothing can hurt you, okay?"

The child nodded tentatively.

"Good," said Paula. "So no more bad dreams can come around here, huh?"

"No more," said Nancy, in a very small voice.

Paula smiled at her and patted her on the head, stroking her hair lovingly, as her own mother had done when she had been a small girl awakened by bad dreams.

Sissy, wanting to contribute, turned to all the other little girls. "Now you all go back to Z-land," she said. "We're on the job and you don't have to worry about shit—"

Paula nudged her for her choice of language.

"What?" said Sissy, impatiently. "I'm sure they hear worse at home."

They went toward the door as the little girls all went back to bed. Paula stopped at the door and looked outside quickly, just to make certain everything was all right. She felt a little silly doing it, but she still felt better for having done it. She turned to Sissy, speaking

softly.

"I just realized something," she said. "Where's Cort? I haven't seen him for hours."

"I don't know," said Sissy. "He called somebody, then took off."

Paula frowned. "He didn't say where he was going?"

"Yeah," said Sissy, with a knowing look. "To check out things that go bump in the night."

***

The RV reverberated with the blasting sound of rock music at full volume. In the heavy fog, the bright lights from the windows of the motor home beamed out like lasers at a rock concert. The motor-home campground on the edge of town was isolated, deserted except for the lone RV. It was the beginning of the summer and there weren't any tourists yet. Forest Green did not get many tourists anyway. It was a small, quiet town where nothing much ever seemed to happen, something Nikki had been only too well aware of. The town was dead. She couldn't wait to go away to college. She had been resigned to yet another boring, uneventful summer when she had seen that cute boy with the long hair outside the grocery store while she was making a phone call to one of her girlfriends.

Cort had noticed her immediately. They had driven into town to pick up groceries. There had been a girl standing at the phone mounted on the wall outside the store, beside the Coke machine. She had taken Cort's breath away. She was dressed in a short-sleeved white blouse with no bra, faded blue jeans, and high heels. She had long legs and her jeans were so tight they looked painted on to her firm flesh. Cort had told the girls that he would wait outside and "watch the car" while they went in and shopped for groceries. Then he had gotten out, swaggered a few steps, and leaned against the front fender, staring openly at the girl.

She had noticed him and she had stared right back while she continued speaking, tossing her long hair, flirting with her body. She had played with her flimsy blouse, slowly unbuttoning the top several buttons and running her fingers up and down between her barely concealed breasts while she kept her gaze locked with his. Cort found that he was having trouble breathing.

When she was finished talking, she hung up the phone and turned away from him. She tore a page out of the telephone book mounted on a swivel by the wall and wrote something on the torn-out page. Then she folded it and stuck it up behind the receiver. She went back toward her car, rolling her hips, tossing her head, not looking at him. She got in and started the black Honda CRX, then pulled around and drove right past him without another look. Cort sprinted across the

parking lot and plucked the folded-up telephone-book page out from behind the receiver. On it, written in bright red lipstick, was the name "Nikki" and a phone number. Beneath that, scrawled with a flourish, was a bright red question mark. Cort couldn't believe it.

He still couldn't believe it as he looked up at her naked body while she straddled him, her pelvis rocking and thrusting against him to the rhythm of the blaring music. Her head was thrown back, her eyes closed, her teeth biting her lower lip as she moaned with pleasure. Jesus, thought Cort, I can't believe this is happening. And this is only the beginning of the summer. Oh, wow...

"They're the best," said Nikki, riding him in perfect time to the driving beat. "The best... you gotta keep it up till the end of the song."

"I'm tryin'," Cort said, gasping. "How much longer?"

Nikki lowered her head close to his ear. Her tongue flicked out and licked his earlobe. "Just ten more minutes," she said, her voice husky.

Cort's eyes grew wide. *Ten minutes?* Jesus, if he tried to keep this up for another ten minutes, he'd have a heart attack! The top of his head was about to blow off. Maybe if he could distract himself, think of something else—multiplication tables or something... Two times two is four; two times four is eight; two times eight is sixteen; two times sixteen—Christ, what the fuck was two times sixteen? He felt Nikki's muscles contract and squeeze him tightly and he almost died. Oh, God, no, not yet, he thought, please, not yet... two times one is two; two times two is four; two times three is six...

***

Jason stood on the edge of the motor-home campground, watching the swaying RV. The driving heavy-metal music was echoing through the deserted shadowy parking lot. His eyes narrowed slightly. He began stalking toward the motor home.

***

Cort didn't think he could survive the guitar solo. With each screaming note, they slammed against each other, panting like wild animals, and Nikki's moaning little cries were driving him insane. Cort didn't know if he could last much longer. He was on the very edge. Christ, he thought, thank God this isn't a Grateful Dead tape...

***

Jason reached down to the power outlet outside the motor home, grabbed the cord, and tore it out with a violent jerk. The cord broke,

leaving the plug sparking in the outlet. The music coming from inside the RV ceased instantly and all the lights went out.

***

"Oh, fuck!" said Nikki.

"Oh, ye-aaah..." moaned Cort.

"Wait a second, I'll—Cort, you *didn't* already.."

"I thought that was the end of the song."

"Great," said Nikki, frustrated, her mood ruined. "Just great."

She got off the bed and put on her coat, stumbling through the RV in the darkness, groping for the AC power switch.

"If this thing is burned out," she said, "friggin' Horace will ground my butt."

Cort sat up. "Who's Horace?"

"My friggin' stepfather and asshole in residence," said Nikki, in a disgusted tone.

She flipped the switch several times with no result. She went to the window, pressed her face against it, and looked out, trying to see the power outlet. In the moonlight, she saw the power cord lying on the ground below.

"How did *that* happen?" she said.

Cort pulled the blankets up around himself "What?"

"Go out and plug the cord back in," she said.

"What? Who pulled it out?" said Cort.

Nikki brushed past him. "Smokey the friggin' bear, I don't know, just go do it."

Cort sighed and started getting dressed. God, he thought, this girl is beautiful and dynamite in the sack. But she is also a pain in the fucking ass. He buttoned up and headed toward the door. He opened it cautiously and poked his head out, looking around. The motor home was surrounded by thick mist and the night air had turned cold. Ominous black storm clouds gathered across the sky.

"Will you hurry up!" Nikki snapped from behind him. "I gotta get this back before Horace finds out I took it."

"All right, all right," said Cort, jumping out. He walked around the RV, looking all around him, suddenly nervous about being all alone out in the middle of nowhere. If somebody was playing games here, it wasn't very funny. He found the power cord and picked it up, staring out into the drifting fog. Without looking at it, he reached down to plug it back in and then he noticed the frayed end and the torn-out plug still stuck in the socket. His breath come out in a sharp hiss. What the hell... he turned around and knocked into a body right behind him in the dark, and he jumped away in fear. It was Nikki.

"What are you doing?" she said, irritated. Then she saw the

cord. "What happened to it?"

Cort handed her the cord. "I don't know," he said, caught in a wave of fear, "but unless you want to look exactly like it, I say we make this place a memory."

He headed back to the door. Nikki looked at the torn cord in her hands, then she looked up and started out into the fog. She couldn't see more than a few feet in front of her. She gulped and hurried after Cort. He was standing in the door of the RV, looking out into the fog.

"I think someone's out there," he said nervously. He suddenly remembered that guy back in the sheriff's office. "What if it's Jason?"

Nikki looked back over her shoulder fearfully. The quiet woods suddenly seemed threatening. She imagined she saw shapes standing out there in the fog. "I don't wanna know," she said, pushing Cort into the motor home and hurrying inside after him. She slammed the door shut and locked it.

Cort jumped into the driver's seat and reached for the ignition. He turned the key, anxious to leave the deserted lot, feeling extremely vulnerable. The RV wouldn't start. He looked up at Nikki and gulped. The damn thing was running perfect before!

"This can't be," he said.

Nikki made a face and shook her head. "It isn't," she said. She reached out and calmly turned the power switch over to "Battery." Cort tried the ignition again and this time the RV started right away, the big motor running smoothly Relieved, Cort looked up at Nikki and grinned, feeling foolish.

"Are you gonna drive or not?" Nikki said, impatiently.

Cort made a face and shifted into reverse. He pressed down hard on the gas pedal and the RV lurched backward. Nikki lost her balance and fell onto the floor. Various loose items fell off several of the counters. Cort didn't give a damn. He just wanted to get out of there. It had seemed like a nice, secluded, and romantic spot when they arrived, but now the place was giving him the creeps.

Nikki struggled to her feet as Cort spun the wheel the other way and the motor home lurched around again, throwing her toward the rear of the camper. She lost her footing and fell back on the bed. Cort laughed loudly as the RV raced down the dirt road, its shocks bottoming out as it bounced over the enormous potholes. Nikki was furious. Enough things had gone wrong already without this guy wrecking her old man's RV. She didn't even want to think about how she would explain it to him if the thing tipped over in the middle of the road.

"That's it," she said, getting back to her feet. "Pull over. I'm drivin'."

Cort reached for the radio, switching it on and turning the

volume dial way up. "No way," he said. "I wanna rock!"

He grinned, bouncing up and down in the seat swaying to the music.

Nikki started to head toward him.

***

Jason flung open the bathroom door and Nikki gasped as she felt herself grabbed and yanked violently back into the bathroom. The door slammed shut behind her.

***

Cort rocked in the driver's seat to the heavy beat of the music, bobbing his head up and down and playing the drums on the steering wheel. He whooped, venting his tension. Driving the big RV felt a little like trying to steer a large boat, but he was quickly getting the hang of it. Hell, the night had turned out all right, after all. He glanced up in the rearview mirror, but he couldn't see Nikki. He turned around in the seat, looking for her, but there was no sign of the girl. The RV started drifting and he turned his eyes back to the road and corrected with a quick jerk on the wheel. Over the frenzied beat of the music, he thought he could hear thumping sounds coming from the bathroom. What the hell was she doing back there?

"Sounds like you're havin' fun in there!" yelled Cort, looking up into the mirror and laughing, teasing her for being a royal bitch before and trying to imagine her bouncing off the walls inside the bathroom as the RV jounced down the rough road at a good clip. Keep *that* up for ten more minutes, he thought. "Need any company?"

***

Nikki strugged, trying to scream, twisting in vain to get away from the terrifying figure in the hockey mask. But there was nowhere to go. She was trapped in the tiny bathroom and there was no escape. She felt the incredibly powerful hands grab her head and jerk it around. She saw the wall coming toward her and she opened her mouth to scream.

Her face struck the wall with unbelievable force. She felt a brief white heat of agony as her teeth shattered and her mouth filled with a wash of blood. The bones of her face cracked, splintered, and collapsed, her eyeballs ruptured and exploded like raw eggs hurled against a wall…

***

Cort looked back into the rearview mirror, still bobbing his head to the

beat. "Hey, what are you doing? Taking a dump? How about if I come back and snatch a peek? Or vice versa?" He cackled with amusement, feeling full of himself.

Bounce her around in there a bit, he thought, let her know who's in charge around here. Got to get these things straightened out right from the start or they'll be walking all over you and ordering you around before you know it. Not this kid, he thought, no way. Ain't no local talent gonna get me by the balls, uh-uh. He slammed his palm on the steering wheel repeatedly, pounding out the beat of the song. God damn, he thought, but she's a hell of a hot piece. Might not be such a bad summer after all.

The deejay segued into another record and Cort recognized the opening chords of one of his favorite heavy-metal power trios launching into their latest hit. He reached for the volume dial and cranked it.

"*All right!* Yo, Nikki! Listen to this!"

He looked up into the rearview mirror, a broad grin on his face... and his smile froze as he saw the white hockey mask reflected in the mirror, the jagged survival knife raised high, the burning eyes staring down at him...

He recoiled in horror and felt Jason's hand grabbing his long hair, jerking his head back with a snap. He saw the gleaming blade coming down fast, heard the guitars screaming, and then all sound was cut off as the knife plunged into his ear. Fire exploded in Cort's mind as the jagged blade ripped through his eardrum, punched through his skull, and penetrated deep into his brain.

The RV veered sharply, out of control as Cort's lifeless body flopped down against the steering wheel. It flew off the road and plunged into the forest, smashing through the brush, tipping over, motor screaming. It crashed on its side and went sliding through the trees, shearing off branches with a prolonged shriek of tearing aluminum and the groan of bending steel. It came to a smoking stop and lay still, motor racing, flames licking up out of the broken windows. The door burst up and out as Jason emerged from the wreckage. He stood on top of the crumpled motor home, surrounded by thick fog, smoke and bright tongues of flame. Drops of fresh, warm blood trickled off the end of his survival knife. He stood there silently, like a proud hunter standing over the fallen metal beast, and he seemed to hear a voice calling to him, urging him on....

***

"What makes you so high and mighty?" Garris said, almost shouting. "You keep forgetting, little Megan, I'm the parent—"

"And *you're* the child," Megan interrupted sarcastically, finishing

the tired old refrain for him. She had been slouching in the office chair, suffering stoically through her father's self-justifying speech, but now she sat up abruptly, frustrated. "When are you going to stop treating me like one!"

"When you stop acting like one," Garris said, struggling to keep his temper with his daughter. "Tommy Jarvis is a very sick boy and you —"

"How do *you* know?" Megan said. "Did you take his temperature?"

"You watch that smart-mouthing, young lady," Garris said, pointing his finger at her.

Megan crossed her eyes in a comical, exaggerated grimace, trying to see her mouth. "Kinda hard to see it from this angle," she said. "Got a mirror?"

" *Megan*..." Garris clenched his fists, wishing for the thousandth time that she was a boy so he could belt her one. But he had promised her mother…

Megan cocked her head, her voice mocking her father, goading him. "Now tell me, 'If your mother was alive, you wouldn't—'"

"That's it, Megan!" Garris shouted, storming over to the door and throwing it open. "Out! I don't need this tonight! Out, Megan!"

A call came in over the radio and Megan, ignoring her father's outburst, picked up the mike and answered it cheerfully.

"Sheriff's office… can you hold on? He's in the can draining his lizard."

Garris slammed the door so hard the windows almost shattered.

"Oh, here he comes now," said Megan, sweetly. "Daddy, it's Rick."

Garris tore the mike out of his daughter's hand, shaking with barely controlled fury. "What!" he shouted, hardly even listening to his deputy as Colone replied. "What? What kinda problem?"

Deputy Rick Colone stood outside his squad car, talking into the mike, staring fearfully at the battered Volkswagen, at the corpse of Lizabeth floating in the ditch beside it, the head driven underwater by an iron spear.

"You better get down here," Colone said tensely. "I found what's left of those two counselors. Looks like someone did them in using Jason's old M.O."

Garris closed his eyes. His breath escaped in a heavy sigh. Jesus, he thought, rubbing his face wearily. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. "I knew I shoulda done something about that sonofa—" He took a deep breath, trying to steady his ragged nerves. "Where are you? Right. I'm on my way."

"What?" said Megan, seeing the expression on her father's face, feeling suddenly concerned. She knew that something terrible had happened.

"Seems your *boyfriend* wants people to believe Jason has returned," Garris said savagely. Maybe now Megan would listen to him. But dammit, he thought, why did it have to take something like this for her to realize that he always had her beat interests at heart?

"I thought Jason was just a legend," Megan said.

"He is," said Garris. "Only Tommy wants to prove the legend is true." He picked up his rifle. "You stay put. And I'm not kidding."

He rushed outside. Megan stood staring after him. She shook her head. She had never seen her father look that way before. She had seen him lose his temper with her hundreds of times, but this was something different. While he had listened to Rick Colone, something seemed to have gone out of him and then his face had become cold and very hard. That deadly expression had frightened her. What had Tommy done?

She walked over to her father's chair and sat down at his desk. Something wasn't right. She just couldn't believe Tommy could do anything crazy, as her father seemed to think. Her father had always believed any boy she was interested in to be capable of anything. He had scared them off before with his bullying tactics, but this was different. This time he really seemed to mean it. Something must have happened, but what? She leaned back in the chair and put her feet up on the desk. The phone rang and startled her, causing her to overbalance. The chair tipped backward and she fell crashing to the floor.

Feeling foolish—and thankful she was alone—she got up and answered the phone, laughing at herself. "Sheriff's office. No, I'm sorry, he's not in at the moment. Can I take a message?"

"This is Tommy Jarvis. Tell the sheriff—"

Megan was instantly alert. She tried to make her voice sound casual. "Oh, hi. This is Megan, his daughter. Remember, I met you this morning—"

"Yeah, hi," said Tommy. "Listen, I've *got* to talk to your dad about Jason. I've got a plan. I'll need to buy some things first, but mainly I need help to—"

"Tommy," Megan said, interrupting him, "my father is out looking for you right now. Something happened tonight and he's sure you're responsible. If he finds you, he'll—"

"I have a *very* good idea what could happen* Tommy said, remembering the sheriffs threat. He no longer cared. He wasn't going to let Garris intimidate him. The sheriffs stubborn refusal to believe him was endangering other people; it had probably already cost some lives

by the sound of things. He was going to make the big cop believe him, no matter what it took. Garris had to see that Tommy was telling the truth before it was too late. "Megan, Jason is out there," he said. "I'm positive he's heading back to the camp. He's gonna keep on killing until—"

"I'll pick you up," said Megan, making a sudden decision. "Where are you?"

Tommy was shocked. "What?"

"It's the only way," Megan said. "My father will nail you in a second in your car. Where are you?"

Tommy looked around wildly. He was at a public telephone outside a gas station that was closed. Everything was dark; the only illumination came from the light over the phone and the headlights of his pickup truck. He squinted, trying to read the sign.

"Uh... Howie's Service Station and Feed Bag Shop. I think it's —"

"I know where it is," said Megan. "See you in a half hour."

She hung up. Tommy replaced the receiver on its cradle and left the phone booth. He looked around, shivering, and zipped up his jacket. Christ, he thought, maybe I *am* crazy. It's bad enough going back to face that redneck cop, knowing what he wants to do to me, but involving his daughter in this thing... He shook his head. Maybe *she* was crazy. Tommy thought. Maybe we're both crazy. I saw a dead man get up out of his grave and she's putting her own ass on the line to help a guy she met in her father's jail cell. She had no reason to trust him, but then he had no reason to trust her, either. How did he know she wasn't going to lead the cops right to him? No, he thought, she wouldn't do that. He couldn't explain how he knew it, but he did.

You had to trust people sometimes. You had to go by your gut instincts. You had to take a gamble and give people a chance, especially if you wanted them to take a gamble and give you a chance. You could go around acting paranoid and not trusting anybody, but if you were always looking to get shafted, you'd wind up just like Megan's father, Tommy thought. I would have to live thinking the worst of everybody, always suspicious, blind to the good in people.

She's willing to take a chance on me, thought Tommy. The least I can do is take the same chance on her. She wasn't like her father. And maybe, with Megan on his side, he'd finally be able to make Sheriff Garris listen. He had to. He was going to have to trust someone, because he needed help. And he suddenly realized just how much he wanted to see her again. He snorted. Great, he thought, that's all I need, to have a thing for the sheriffs daughter. There's a relationship that's really got a chance, right? But then again, maybe none of them had much of a chance now. Not with Jason on the loose

again.

***

Jason stood on the edge of the lake, gazing across it at the campground shrouded in the mist. It looked different somehow, but he was sure it was the same place. He could feel it. Savage, random images flickered through his twisted mind. He remembered splashing desperately in the water, gasping for breath, sinking, feeling water rush into his lungs. He heard the sounds of screaming, far-off screams, ghostly echoes of the past floating toward him across the blank surface of the lake. He saw vaguely familiar faces twisted in grimaces of terror, bodies leaking life, limbs severed, heads rolling in the dirt, blood, blood everywhere. The still water of Crystal Lake rippled as he gazed at it. It boiled with blood. The mist became a red haze. His fingers closed around the hilt of the bloodstained machete, and he started to prowl along the shore, heading toward the camp.

# SIX

The red and blue flashing lights atop the squad cars created a strobe effect as they lit up the road and the surrounding woods. The lights on the ambulance flashed on and off, but there was no sirens blaring, disturbing the quiet of the night. It was too late for sirens, past time for alarms. The ambulance attendants took their time with the stretcher gurneys, buckling the straps down tightly over the bloodied sheets covering the bodies.

Sheriff Garris stood by the side of the road, watching with disgust as the attendants lifted the stretchers up into the back of the ambulance. He blamed himself for this. He should have prevented it. This was what came of being too easy on them, he thought. This was what came of being tolerant. Crazy kids, he remembered himself thinking when Tommy had first burst into his office. Harmless pranks. Yeah, real harmless. That damn kid was more than just disturbed. He was a raving homicidal maniac. Only an animal would do something like this—a rabid animal. And there was only one way to deal with rabid animals.

He turned and walked back toward the patrol cars, where officers Pappas and Thornton waited for him. They had arrived shortly after Colone had made the call, and the sight of the corpses had unnerved them. Neither of the men had ever see anything like this before. And it was up to Garris to make sure that neither of them would ever see anything like it in Forest Green again.

"I want all officers, units, and stations within a fifty-mile radius alerted about this whacko kid," said Garris.

"Yes, sir," said Pappas, nodding.

"You have his vehicle description," Garris went on. "I want roadblocks on—"

They heard Rick Colone's voice yelling in the distance. "Sheriff! Get over here!"

Garris started running toward the sound of his deputy's voice. Colone had been investigating the surrounding area, looking for evidence, but he had obviously found a trail or something that led him deeper into the woods, away from the road. Garris plunged through the trees, moving quickly through the brush, searching for Colone. He saw a flashlight being waved off in the distance.

"Sheriff!" Colone cried. "Over here!"

Garris ran toward the waving light. He found Colone standing at one edge of a wooded clearing, his face pale. He was holding something in his outstretched hands. It was a pair of men's glasses. They were spattered with blood.

"Is that all you found?" said Garris.

"I wish it was," Colone said tensely. He aimed his flashlight at the ground.

Garris grimaced with nausea as he looked down at what was illuminated by the flashlight beam. It was a severed arm. A man's arm, in an army combat fatigue sleeve. Blood darkened the sleeve where the limb had been hacked off. Colone wordlessly moved the light over several feet, aiming it at a point a short distance away. The beam of the flashlight fell upon a severed leg, also in fatigues. The many dark stains on the green cloth could only be one thing. The limbs had been amputated cleanly, apparently with one powerful, violent stroke of a sharp-edged weapon.

"Better get out the Hefty Bags," said Garris. He took a deep breath. "Looks like our boy *desperately* wants us to believe his story."

"He sure chose the right day to pull this shit," Colone said.

"What do you mean?" said Garris.

Colone looked up at him. "Happy Friday the 13th," he said softly.

***

The machete came down on the telephone wire with a sharp whack, cutting it in half. Jason looked at the severed wire hanging down against the cabin wall, then his gaze traveled up to the window. The light was on inside.

Paula had fallen asleep on her bed, next to the phone. Sissy was sitting cross-legged on her own bed, wearing a set of headphones as she listened to her Walkman and munched popcorn. She was leafing through the pages of a Playgirl magazine. She came to the centerfold and spread it out, looking at it critically, then she picked up a ruler and laid it down upon the magazine, making a measurement. She giggled. A figure quickly passed by the open window behind her and she caught the flicker of movement out of the corner of her eye. She turned, frowning, craning her head around to look.

She took off her headphones and there was the tinny sound of rock music blaring from them for a moment before she switched off the Walkman. She walked over to the window and looked out. The campground seemed quiet and deserted. She was almost certain she had seen something. She started to walk away from the window when she heard the unmistakable sound of leaves crunching underfoot. She turned back to the window quickly.

"All right," she said, "who's out there?"

Paula stirred in her bed, disturbed by the noise. "What's goin' on?" she said sleepily.

"I think someone's messin' around out there," said Sissy nervously.

Paula smirked. "It's gotta be Cort," she said, settling back down onto the bed. "You know how he loves to try and scare us. Teach him a lesson." She rolled over and closed her eyes.

Sissy heard footsteps right below the window. She narrowed her eyes and glanced toward the window, then quietly tiptoed over to the table where they had been playing Clue and snacking. She picked up an unfinished can of Cherry Coke, glanced back toward the window, and broke into a malicious grin.

Slowly, she tiptoed back over to the window, trying not to laugh. She crouched down below it and slowly extended her hand outside. She turned the can over quickly and poured the sticky liquid out, hearing it splatter on someone outside and just below the open window. She stifled a laugh.

Quickly, she pulled her hand back in and jumped back, expecting a reaction. She was surprised not to get one. Slowly, she crept back toward the open window. She put her hands upon the window ledge and peered over it, looking down.

A figure wearing a white hockey mask suddenly sprang up directly in front of her. She felt two powerful hands grabbing her and pulling her hard, yanking her right through the open window. It all happened so fast she barely had a chance to gasp, much less cry out.

Paula, still not quite asleep, heard the noise and turned over in her bed just as Sissy's legs went flying out through the window. She caught a quick flicker of movement, but in her groggy state, the image didn't quite register.

"Hey, you guys," she said sleepily, "try not to wake the kids."

She heard a rustling in the leaves outside, then there was a whoosh, followed by a thump and then a crunching sound. Then silence. Paula snickered softly. Fun and games, she thought. She burrowed down into her pillow and went back to sleep.

***

Megan drove her bright orange Camaro down the road heading out of town. Howie's Service Station was just off the highway, where Howie could get the interstate business. Her lights were on high beam, illuminating the deserted, wooded road.

You're really out on a limb this time, Megan ole girl, she told herself. If her father found out about this, there would be hell to pay. He hadn't been kidding when he told her to stay put in the sheriff's office. When he came back and found her gone, he was just going to lose it totally.

She wondered why she was doing this. It wasn't just to drive her father crazy, although that had been plenty of reason for her to hang it out over the edge before. It served him right for trying to treat

her like a baby. She had to fight back, otherwise he'd overwhelm her and she'd just wind up sitting around the house all day, like her mother had when she was still alive. I'll bet that's just what he would like, thought Megan. He would just love it if I took Mom's place, staying home and cooking for him, cleaning his house, doing his fucking laundry, never going out, having no damn life of my own to speak of. Well, she carried her weight around the house—she didn't mind that—but she had a right to her own life too. Her father was relentless in the way he tried to keep her down, so she had to be equally relentless in rebelling against him. But that wasn't the only reason this time.

No, there was more to this than just fighting back against her father. This had more to do with Tommy Jarvis. There was something about him, something she had felt from the first moment that she saw him in that cell back in her father's office. She had felt herself attracted to boys before; that was nothing new, but this was different. It wasn't just that he was cute. There was something else about him, something she couldn't quite put her finger on. Something that made her want to trust him. Maybe it was his eyes. It was like... like he had been hurt, and because he knew all about what being hurt felt like, he wanted to do everything he could to keep others from being hurt the same way he had been.

Maybe that seemed crazy, to feel something like that about someone she hardly even knew, but she *had* felt it and she could not believe that Tommy was a dangerous criminal. She could not believe that he was sick. Sick with worry, maybe, that had definitely come through, but sick in the head? A psycho? No, she thought, no way. It just can't be. If he was some sort of deranged criminal, if he really was dangerous, would he risk coming back to town and calling up the sheriff's office, knowing how her father felt about him? Did criminals call up the police just to let them know that they were back in town? Did they call up the county sheriff and ask for help, knowing that the sheriff wanted nothing better than to throw their ass in jail and lose the key?

No, Tommy was sincere, she knew it, and if that meant that he was telling the truth about Jason—unbelievable as that seemed—then it was all the more reason why she should help him. If even half the stories she had heard about Jason Vorhees were true, then her father could be in terrible danger and not even be aware of it. She knew she was taking a hell of a chance, but sometimes people have to take risks, she told herself. You get back what you give. If you want people to trust you, to open up to you and to be honest with you, then you've got to open up and give a little trust and honesty yourself. And she believed that Tommy Jarvis was worth taking a chance on.

Up ahead, she saw the darkened sign for Howie's Service

Station and she turned the wheel, heading off the road and onto the shoulder. She pulled up into the service station lot and slammed on the brakes, the tires screeching to a stop. She jumped out of the car and saw Tommy running up to her from the comer of the building. She could see his pickup truck parked around the side, by the telephone booth.

"I'm gonna borrow your car," said Tommy. "You can't do this with me. It's much too dangerous."

She glanced past him at his pickup truck. "You wanna talk dangerous, you can't leave that truck out in plain sight."

"What?"

"Hide it behind the station," Megan said, "then we can get the hell out of here."

"Look, this isn't a game," Tommy said, intensely. He had thought it over and he knew it was crazy to take Megan with him. He'd be exposing her to terrible danger and he didn't want anything to happen to her. He could not forget what had happened to Allen Hawes, who had also tried to help him. "You're *not* going with me. I'm already responsible for the death of—"

"Didn't you say you needed some supplies to do this?" Megan said, cutting him off.

"Uh... yes," said Tommy, momentarily taken aback by her refusal to listen to him, "but—"

"Then let's get goin'," Megan said firmly. "We can argue on the way. You tell me what you need," she added with a sly smile, "and I'll make sure you get it."

She turned around and went back toward the Camaro, which was sitting unattended with its engine running.

"Besides, " she said as she got into the car, "nobody drives this puppy but me." She pointed to his truck. "Now hide that heap and let's get cookin'"

Tommy saw that there would be no arguing with her. He was quickly learning that she was just as stubborn as her father. Fortunately, that was where the similarity ended. He sighed with exasperation and ran back to the truck. He jumped in, cranked the motor over and pulled around behind the service-station building, swinging the truck in back beside the dumpster, where it would be well concealed from anyone driving by. Then he ran back toward the bright orange Camaro The two of them were in this together now, and once they'd started, there could be no turning back. He got in on the passenger side and Megan was already peeling out before he'd closed the door.

***

Jason walked past the windows of the girls' dormitory cabin, hauling Sissy's limp body over his shoulder. The corpse had no head and blood leaked down on Jason's clothing. It dripped onto the ground, leaving a scarlet trail on the leaf-strewn path.

Close by, separated from him by the cabin wall, were the beds of the sleeping little girls, arranged in a row beneath the windows. As he walked past the windows in the moonlight, his shadow fell across the dreaming children, touching each of them in turn. When it fell on little Nancy, her eyes suddenly flashed open and she sat up in bed abruptly, an expression of stark terror on her innocent little face.

It's *not* a dream, she told herself, it's not, it's not....

***

The bright orange Camaro flew down the road, its tires kicking up a cloud of dust behind it. Megan always drove fast, knowing that none of the men on the Forest Green police force would be anxious to bust the sheriff's daughter for speeding.

"Can this tub go any faster?" Tommy said dryly.

She gave him a flirtatious look. "You got it," she said, confident other driving ability. Besides, she knew this road like the back of her hand. "Just keep an eye out for roadblocks."

"Okay," said Tommy, deadpan. "There's one."

Megan quickly returned her attention to the road. As they rounded the bend, she saw two police cars with lights flashing, parked head to head, blocking the way ahead of them.

She hit the brakes hard and the Camaro skidded to a stop, drifting sideways. Her father really wasn't kidding. If they saw Tommy sitting in the front seat with her... She grabbed Tommy by the arm and pulled him down onto her lap.

"Get down."

Taken by surprise, Tommy suddenly found himself lying across the front seat of her car, his face in Megan's lap, staring at her tight-jeaned crotch. She slammed the gearshift lever into reverse, floored it, and the tires spun as the Camaro peeled out backward down the road. The cops at the roadblock responded quickly at the sight of the bright orange car accelerating in reverse, away from the roadblock. They leaped into their squad cars and gave pursuit.

Pappas grabbed the mike off the dashboard. "Unit 45, Officer Pappas to Sheriff Garris. Do you copy?"

Garris was not a "numbers cop," as he always referred to the police on television. He saw no reason for using a series of codes to represent various situations his officers might encounter. It was a small town, they all knew each other, and there was never any need for the sort of urgency that would be required in a large police department

with a lot of radio traffic. Sheriff Garris saw no reason why they should use the ten-code system. Garris preferred informal "clear-speak." Besides, he had a lousy head for numbers.

"Yeah, I'm here," his voice came back over the radio in the pursuing squad car.

"Got a different vehicle than the one we're looking for that just turned tail seeing us," said Pappas. "Saw somebody duck down."

"Got a description or plates?" said Garris, over the radio.

"The whole enchilada," Pappas said. "It's an eighty-two orange Camaro, license—"

Megan backed the car into a turnoff, shifted into first, and hit it. The tires smoked as she laid rubber, running from the pursuing squad cars.

"Son of a shittin—That's my daughter's car!" shouted Garris.

That was just what Pappas had been afraid of. He hadn't been certain, but he sure as hell was going to check in with the sheriff before he engaged in hot pursuit after the boss man's daughter.

"How should we proceed, sir?" he said cautiously.

"With extreme care, for God's sake," Garris said, beside himself with worry. "If that kid is with her, there's every good chance he'll do something crazy."

***

Tommy was still facedown in Megan's lap, staring at her crotch. "Please don't do anything crazy," he said, concerned for her.

"I know what I'm doing," Megan said as she threw the car into a four-wheel drift, sliding around a curve. "I got your supplies for you, didn't I? Now if I can just get to Cunningham Road, I can lose them."

Tommy started to sit up, but she pushed him right back down.

"Just stay where you are," she said.

Tommy put his head back down into her crotch. "Whatever you say," he said, keeping his voice perfectly straight.

The car drifted through another turn, tires screeching, rear end slewing around. Megan almost spun out, but she fought the wheel and managed to keep the car under control. The tires grabbed and the Camaro shot ahead as she chirped through the gears, shifting like a pro. She was grateful now for all the times she had gone joyriding with her friends along the back roads of Forest Green, safe in the knowledge that she knew when the town cops patrolled the roads and when they were on break. There were certain advantages to being the sheriff's daughter and knowing the routine of a small-town police department.

Tommy's head bounced around in Megan's lap and, in spite of himself, he was beginning to get turned on by her close proximity.

Those jeans were so damn tight, the outline of her crotch was clearly visible, and he was only human.

"This is gonna be a hairy turn," said Megan, from just above him. "Better grab a hold of something."

Tommy glanced up at her with a look that said, "You gotta be kidding!"

Up ahead of them, two signposts marked a fork in the road. One sign read CUNNINGHAM ROAD. The other one was labeled CAMP FOREST GREEN, with an arrow pointing to the right. Megan spun the wheel, sending the Camaro drifting sideways toward Cunningham Road, and there, right in front of her, was her father's car, with Rick Colone's car right behind it. The road was sealed off. Both the sheriff and his deputy were outside, behind the police car, aiming their rifles over the roof. There was barely enough room to stop.

Megan slammed her foot down onto the brake pedal and the disc brakes squealed in protest as the Camaro fishtailed to a stop, inches away from the sheriff's car. Garris didn't even blink and his aim didn't waver for a second. He stood stock still, aiming the powerful rifle right through the windshield.

"Megan, step out of the car!" he said.

Megan stared at her father with disbelief. He was actually pointing a gun at her! She bit her lower lip and looked down at Tommy, who had been thrown to the floorboards, his face at Megan's feet. He stared up at her with dread.

"It's all over," she said with resignation.

Tommy shook his head, sadly, getting up. "It's just beginning," he said.

***

Paula stirred restlessly in her sleep. The sound of the cabin door slowly creaking open awakened her. She opened her eyes, lying very still, listening. She heard footsteps approaching across the cabin floor, coming closer, coming toward her bed. She turned her head and gasped as her gaze fell upon a bloody machete.

Little Nancy stood before her, dressed in her pajamas and holding the red-stained machete out toward her. Red droplets fell from the blade onto the floor.

"I can't sleep, Paula," Nancy said in a frightened little voice. "I'm scared. I saw someone at the window and—"

Paula sat up quickly and grabbed the machete away from the little nine-year-old. "Where'd you get this?" she said.

Nancy pointed. "I found it outside."

Paula glanced quickly around the cabin. Everything looked normal. All the other little girls were sound asleep. She took a deep

breath and relaxed, but she was going to have to have a talk with Cort and Sissy. This wasn't funny, goofing around in the middle of the night, leaving things like this lying around, scaring little girls to death. A machete dipped in paint, for God's sake! It looked a bit too realistic.

"You know what?" she said, trying to make her voice sound steady and comforting to the little girl. "Sissy and Cort are playing jokes," she said, remembering the nonsense from before, at the window. "You know, trying to scare each other."

"Why?" said Nancy.

"Well, grown-ups think it's funny to get scared," said Paula.

"Are they grown-ups?" Nancy said uncertainly.

Paula grinned. "That's debatable."

"Huh?" said Nancy, not understanding the big word.

Paula shook her head and put the machete down on the floor by her bed. "Never mind," she said. She glanced at her watch. "Is it that late already?" she said to herself. Still no word from Megan.

She reached for the phone and started to dial.

"I can't believe no one called back. I better—"

"Who ya calling?" Nancy said.

Paula wasn't holding the receiver to her ear, so she had no idea that the phone was dead. She stopped dialing, realizing that Nancy didn't need to hear this conversation. The little girl was already frightened. There was no point to letting her listen to a call about some missing counselors. The counselors were supposed to be the ones who had everything under control. She hung up the phone and got out of bed.

"Why don't we first try to find Sissy and Cort?" she said in an offhand tone, "and then you can go back to sleep."

She took Nancy by the hand and headed for the door.

"But what if they try to scare *us?*" said Nancy, sounding very worried.

Paula grinned and leaned down toward the little girl, speaking in a conspirational tone. 'Well scare 'em right back!"

Nancy giggled with delight at the prospect of the game. Paula led her down the stairs, making a game of quietly sneaking around the campground like a couple of Indians on the prowl, looking for the missing counselors. Nancy was enjoying this, her fears momentarily forgotten, but Paula was beginning to get worried. She was going to have a few harsh words to say to Cort and Sissy when she found them.

First Cort takes off somewhere, without a word, without leaving a message saying where he could be reached or when he would return. Then Megan takes off, supposedly to ask her dad if there had been any word from Darren and Lizabeth, but Paula knew the real

reason she had gone back to town was to see that Tommy Jarvis guy. So while Megan's off flirting with some troublemaker, Cort comes back and both he and Sissy take off somewhere, to go screwing around in the middle of the night, leaving her alone to watch a campful of little kids. What the hell kind of an attitude was that? Paula was getting angry. They had a responsibility here; they were getting paid to watch these kids and to take care of them, not to go fucking off in the middle of the night. This just wasn't cool. There was going to be trouble.

From the shadows behind them, Jason watched the two girls moving around the campground.

***

"And I said shut up!" Garris shouted.

Megan shook her head, standing up to her father, trying to sound reasonable. She couldn't see why he was being so bullheaded. "All he's asking is for you to check it out."

They were in the sheriff's office and Tommy was sitting in a chair, handcuffed, as Garris stormed around the room, fighting to control his temper and clearly losing the battle.

"You got me where you want me," Tommy said to Garris, pleading with the man. "There's no reason not to—"

Garris turned on him with fury, cutting him off. "If I had you where I wanted you," he said, his face flushed, "they'd be pumping your ass full of formaldehyde!"

Megan stepped between them, afraid that her father was going to strike Tommy. "Can't you at least *call* the camp and make sure everything's all right?" she said.

"We have, trying to track you down!" said Garris, breathing hard, still pumped up with adrenaline from the thought of his daughter being with a psychotic killer. He wanted to strangle Tommy Jarvis with his bare hands. "The phone there is disconnected."

"Doesn't that tell you something?" Tommy said.

"Yeah," said Garris, "they should've paid their bill."

He was starting to calm down a little now that the danger had passed, but it wasn't the calm of relaxation. It was the calm of a man who knew he had an unpleasant job to do and had steeled himself to do it. It had been all he could do to keep from blowing the kid away back there on Cunningham Road. He had Tommy Jarvis in his rifle sights. If Megan hadn't stepped in front of him, he might have squeezed the trigger and finished it right then and there—closed the books on this damn Jason thing once and for all.

He had been against Megan's working at the camp from the very start. What was the point of it? He always gave her everything she needed. He gave her a generous allowance. He had been

convinced that the only reason she wanted the job was so that she could screw around with some goddamned teenage counselor out there by the lake, away from her daddy's prying eyes. He had resisted the idea, but in the end, he had given in to it rather than go on with all the arguments. Better to have her close by, he thought, where he knew where she was and more or less what she was doing, and especially where he could have easy access to any boys she might encounter; boys like that longhair, Cort, who looked like a doper if he ever saw one, boys who, after seeing him, would think twice about messing around with the sheriffs daughter. Better that than to have her running wild all summer, with nothing but time on her hands and trouble to get into. And she was getting harder and harder to manage. So he had agreed to let her work for the summer as a counselor at the camp, figuring that at least there would be some adult supervision.

But now everything had turned into an absolute mess. The "adult supervision" had turned out to be a couple of college students who had gotten themselves hacked to pieces by a psycho kid and now his daughter was involved with the perpetrator, without even the vaguest idea of how close she had come to ending up just like Darren and Lizabeth. Now there was a bunch of unsupervised little kids out there at that camp, some unidentified bits and pieces of dead bodies packed into plastic bags, and he had been so busy chasing all over the county, looking for his daughter and that deranged kid, that there hadn't even been any time to call the psychiatric clinic or the D.A.'s office. And he sure as hell wasn't going to call the county district attorney until he was certain that Megan was well out of it. All he needed was for Megan to be standing up for the kid he had arrested, making a scene, making him look like a man who couldn't even control his own daughter, much less the jurisidiction he had been entrusted with. He had put in a call to Carpenter, requesting assistance with a homicide. Let them handle Tommy Jarvis, he thought. As for himself, the first chance he got, he was going to send Megan home and have Rick Colone stay there and watch her to make sure she was kept out of the way until Tommy Jarvis was long gone, safely locked up in the psycho ward.

It was his own damn fault for being so lenient. He should have blown the damn kid away when he had the chance, but who would've thought a kid like that could be so far gone as to ambush people on the road and hack them into pieces just to prove that his own twisted view of reality was genuine? He probably didn't even realize that he had done it. Deep down inside, Tommy Jarvis probably really believed that Jason Vorhees was still alive, returned from the grave to take vengeance on the town of Crystal Lake. The poor kids' mind had snapped when his family had been murdered and those idiots at the

clinic had let him go because he had seemed harmless. But while Tommy Jarvis might be harmless, inside him there was another, very different person—a homicidal maniac, a real Jason come back from the grave—only this Jason had never really been buried in the Eternal Rest Cemetery. This Jason had been buried deep in Tommy's subconscious mind and the trip out to the cemetery must have awakened him.

Jesus, what a world, thought Garris. On one hand, he almost felt sorry for the poor kid with the twisted mind, yet on the other, how could you sympathize with anybody who butchered innocent people, hacking them to bits like so much meat? Split personality or not, Tommy Jarvis and the killer were both in the same body and that body had to be stopped once and for all, at any cost. It was his responsibility.

"You just sit tight, *Jason*," Garris said, pointing at Tommy. "Once the authorities from Carpenter get here, you'll—"

A call came in on the police radio and Rick Colone answered it. He looked up at the sheriff now and interrupted, speaking with an urgent tone.

"Sheriff," he said, "you'd better take this "

Glaring at the handcuffed boy, Garris went over to the radio.

"Sheriff Garris."

Megan watched the expression change on her father's face as he listened to the call. He had suddenly gone pale.

"Approximately what time?" he said.

He glanced at Tommy, cold hatred in his eyes.

"I'll be right there."

Garris grabbed his coat and hat. Megan came running to him.

"What?" she asked. "What happened?"

Garris ignored his daughter. He glanced at Deputy Colone.

"Rick, keep an eye on this whacko. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Daddy," Megan insisted, "what is going on?"

"And make sure my daughter stays put," the sheriff said to his deputy, in a tone that meant there would be hell to pay if she didn't. He looked hard at Megan. "She's grounded."

Megan stood in front of him, blocking his way to the door, pushing on his chest, demanding an explanation. "Tell me!" she shouted.

Garris almost struck her, but he got himself under control just in time. This was no time to be losing his temper. Instead he grabbed her by her shoulders and shook her hard enough to make her teeth rattle.

"They just found your friend Cort and some girl," he said, clenching his teeth, fighting back his fury. "Her head was crushed in

and Cort—he had a knife rammed right through his skull!"

Megan couldn't believe it. "No," she said, shaking her head, refusing to accept it. "No, it's not—"

"Tommy Jarvis is a psychopathic killer," Garris said, determined to make his daughter see the truth. "A very deranged boy who wants you to believe that—"

"Jason *did* do it!" Tommy shouted. "I swear!" A desperate thought occurred to him. It was a chance. A slim chance, but it was the only one he had now. "Sheriff, *when* were they murdered?"

Garris ignored Tommy's outburst. He held his daughter by her shoulders, looking at her with a pleading expression. "For God's sake," he said, begging her, "stay away from him. Please, Meggie."

He let her go and started to walk past her, but she grabbed him, refusing to let go.

"Dad," she said, her voice intense, "what time did it happen?"

Garris hesitated. "They think somewhere around eight-thirty or nine o'clock."

Megan stepped right up to him, confronting him, refusing to be dismissed. "I was with Tommy all that time," she said.

Garris stared at her, thinking that the whole world had gone crazy. His own daughter was lying to protect a psychopathic murderer. She didn't realize what she was doing. Lying to protect... but his cop's instincts suddenly took over, the instinct to always suspect anything until there was absolute proof. What if she wasn't lying? No, he thought, she had to be lying. It wasn't really her fault; she didn't understand, because she had an infantile crush on this boy who looked so innocent, and she'd do anything to keep from having to accept the truth.

"Rick, I'll call you when I get there," he said to

Colone, brushing past Megan and slamming the door.

Megan looked at Tommy with a sinking feeling, knowing what her father must be thinking. Tommy gritted his teeth in frustration and looked away. His worst fears had been realized. It was too late. The terrible killing spree had started and Sheriff Garris was trying to blame it all on him. Jason was about to paint the town of Forest Green blood red and there was nothing he could do about it. Nothing at all.

# SEVEN

It was getting cold and the wind was starting to pick up. There was a storm approaching. Paula and Nancy tiptoed back into the cabin quietly so as not to wake the other children. Paula led Nancy over to her bed and helped her in, then tucked the blankets in around her. She crouched down next to the little girl, smiling reassuringly.

"I'm sure Cort and Sissy are back in their cabins," she whispered. "So you just go back to sleep and don't worry, okay?"

"But what if I get scared again?" said Nancy.

"Shh," said Paula. "You know what I used to do when I was a little girl and I got scared?"

Nancy shook her head.

"I would close my eyes," Paula whispered, "and say a little prayer. And pretty soon, you know what? Everything scary went away." She nodded. "It worked for me. I'll bet it'll work for you too."

She kissed Nancy on the forehead.

"Good night. See ya in the morning."

She stood up, looking down at the little girl and smiling tenderly, never suspecting that she was being watched—that just a short distance away, on the other side of the window, Jason was looking in at her, eyes wild with bloodlust.

Oblivious to death standing so close, Nancy smiled up at Paula and rolled over on her side, closing her eyes. Paula turned and started walking slowly, quietly, toward the door.

Jason kept pace with her outside, moving from window to window, never taking his eyes from her.

Paula quietly closed the door and descended the steps, looking all around the campground, wondering where Cort and Sissy were. The wind had come up quickly and it was starting to blow away the fog, making the shimmering lake surface visible. Dark clouds roiled in the moonlit sky.

She couldn't imagine where Cort and Sissy were, but she could imagine what they might be doing. Just great, she thought, everybody's getting paired off except me. I get stuck doing all the work. What the hell does anybody care? Darren and Lizabeth have disappeared—God only knows what's happened to them—and everyone else has gone off somewhere to party and I'm supposed to run this camp all by myself? Well, fuck that, she thought. How the hell am I supposed to take care of these kids all alone?

There was a rustling behind her and Paula quickly spun around, but it was just the wind blowing through the trees. The campground seemed deserted. She suddenly felt very alone and vulnerable. Damn, she thought, it's beautiful out here during the day,

but at night, this place gets really creepy. She shivered and started running back toward her cabin, anxious to be inside, out of the dark.

She rushed up to the cabin and ran up the steps. The door was closed. She could have sworn that she had left it open. Maybe Sissy had finally returned from wherever she had gone off to with Cort. If she had, she was going to get a real talking to about running off without a word.

"Sissy?"

Paula entered the cabin and was disappointed to find it empty. They still hadn't returned, then. Where could they be? This was ridiculous. No sign of Sissy, no sign of Cort, no sign of Megan...

She hurried to the phone and started to dial, then realized the phone was dead. She put the receiver back down onto the cradle. Funny, the phone had been working perfectly before. Maybe the storm the other day had downed some power lines somewhere, but hadn't Megan and Cort both used the phone after the storm? Still, there were any number of other things that could have gone wrong, not the least of which was the management forgetting to pay the bill. That wouldn't have surprised her one bit after the way things had been going. Well, at least that explained why there hadn't been any calls from anyone If they hadn't been able to get through, then... She frowned.

There were red stains on the floor beside her bed, where she had left the machete little Nancy had found outside; the machete that she thought had been covered with red paint as a gag; the machete that was not there anymore. And the red stains on the floor did not look very much like paint now.

She heard a noise and quickly turned around, feeling a sudden chill of alarm. The cabin door was opening slowly, moving with a soft, creaking sound.

Paula stood utterly motionless for a moment, watching with dread as the door opened with excruciating slowness. Was it just the wind? Maybe Cort and Sissy were playing games with her. Or maybe it wasn't Cort and Sissy. And maybe it wasn't the wind, either. All of a sudden, the dead phone took on ominous meaning and the missing machete was no longer a joke.

Almost as if in a trance, she started moving to the door. She swallowed hard, suddenly aware of the silence, of her vulnerability all alone in the camp, of the sound of her own heart hammering in her chest. Slowly, tentatively extending her hand, she reached for the doorknob, hesitating as if it was capable of burning her.

The door suddenly *slammed* open, missing her face by inches, and a strong gust of wind blew into the cabin. Paula recoiled from the violently swinging door. It blew open all the way and struck the inside wall of the cabin, rebounded, and then slammed shut once more.

Paula almost sobbed with relief. Christ, it had only been the wind, after all, she thought. She put her hand up to her throat and took a deep breath. She started to giggle. Get a grip on yourself, girl, she thought, you're starting to jump at shadows. Look at this, a goddamned door almost gave you a heart attack.

She took the doorknob firmly, twisted it, swung open the door, and gasped with shock at the sight of Jason standing in the doorway. He was holding the missing machete in his hand.

Paula backed away, eyes wide, staring at the terrifying eyes behind the hockey mask, unable to look away from that demented, shining gaze. She opened her mouth to scream, but her vocal cords were paralyzed with fear. She couldn't breathe. She gasped for air, but she couldn't seem to fill her lungs. It was if an impossible weight had been placed upon her chest, pressing down relentlessly. Her entire upper body felt as if it were being squeezed in a giant vice. *Oh, no*, she thought, *oh no, please, oh God, no—no—no…*

Jason moved into the room and slammed the door behind him. The sound of the door banging was like a rifle shot. A scream ripped loose from Paula's throat as Jason lunged at her.

***

Rick Colone's fist came down like a hammer, squashing the bug that had landed on the sheriff's desk, mashing the insect like an overripe blackberry. He made a face of disgust and carefully wiped away the mess. He felt Tommy's gaze upon him and looked up, giving the boy an evil smile, as if to say, "That bug could've been you, kid." Tommy looked away and Colone grimaced and went back to filling out his reports.

He hated paperwork. Before he had joined the Forest Green police force, he had known that police officers had to fill out reports, but he had never imagined just how much paperwork the job entailed. And Sheriff Garris did not tolerate sloppy paperwork. It all had to be done neatly, made out in black ink, written with Pentel Rolling Writers in easily legible block printing and in triplicate. No cross-outs or erasures were permitted, and woe to the officer who committed the cardinal mistake of misspelling a word on his report. The only worse crime was not filing it correctly. Garris was an absolute stickler for such details and sometimes the job made Rick Colone feel as if he were more of a bank clerk or a secretary than a law enforcement officer. And there would be a ton of paperwork to do now, thanks to this psychotic kid.

Colone glanced up at Tommy Jarvis once again and glared at him hatefully. Look at him sitting there, Colone thought, calm as you please, as if he's in there for a fucking traffic violation or a drunk and

disorderly. Fucking kid's carved up at least seven people and he just sits there looking innocent and put upon. There's only one way to handle animals like that, Colone thought. You put 'em down, once and for all. You shoot a rabid dog, you don't hold it for trial, so some smart-ass lawyer can get it off on a not-guilty by a reason-of-insanity plea. So they'd put him back in that psychiatric institution. What kind of punishment was that? Like what's-his-name, that kid who shot the president. He tried to kill the president of the United States, for God's sakes, and they put him in a hospital where he gets to sit around and watch TV all day, enjoy three squares, and complain because they don't let him go out for walks. Goddamn world's gone crazy, thought Colone.

On the other hand, he thought, this whole thing was not without certain advantages. When this story got out, it would really blow. It would have to be one of the biggest murder trials in the history of the state. There'd be newspaper reporters coming into town from all over the country, television crews from all the networks, and they'd want to interview the officers who had brought this killer in—the men who had captured the mass murderer. Garris would get the lion's share of the attention, to be sure, but there'd be enough publicity left over for him. After all, he had been with Garris when they had made the capture. He'd get his name in the newspapers and on TV and it could easily lead to a job with a big city police department in some place like Los Angeles or San Francisco or Chicago, or maybe even Miami.

He saw himself several years from now, dressed up in a six-hundred-dollar suit, wearing custom- tailored shirts and imported shoes, carrying the gold shield of a homicide detective. He'd trade in his .357 for a Smith & Wesson Model 29, a blue-black forty-four-caliber Magnum with a six-inch barrel, just like the one Clint Eastwood carried as Inspector Harry Callahan. He'd be looking good and living the high life, instead of being stuck out in a nowhere town like Forest Green. He'd be able to enjoy big city nightlife and date beautiful big city women like the ones he had been watching since he was a kid.

He glanced up at Megan. She met his gaze and he quickly looked away. Damn stuck-up chick's just drop-dead beautiful and knows it too, Colone thought. If it wasn't for the fact that Garris was her old man, he'd have nailed her a long time ago. Little bitch shakes her ass all over town, just askin' for it, thought Colone.

For about a year now, Colone had toyed with the fantasy of catching her at something, something she'd be terrified of her daddy finding out, something he could hold over her. He imagined himself driving her out to Lake Forest Green and having her right there on one of the picnic tables. She'd protest at first, she'd fight him, but then she would give in and wrap those sexy legs around him, her eyes closed

and her mouth open, moaning...

Megan watched Colone bent over his paperwork, stealing glances at her, and she grimaced with disgust. She knew just what he was thinking. It was written on the sleazeball's face every time he looked at her. It made her sick, just thinking of him undressing her in his mind. She wondered what her father would say if he knew how Rick Colone had been sniffing around her for the past year like a dog in heat. She hated being left alone with him and she was grateful for Tommy's presence, even though he was locked up in the holding cell. Colone was gutless; he'd never have the nerve to make a move on her with anyone else watching. She knew he was terrified of what she might tell her father. She turned her attention back to the sketch pad on her lap. She glanced up at Colone briefly, then back at Tommy, sitting on the cot inside the holding cell with his head held in his hands. She bent down to the sketch pad once again.

She wrote down, in large letters, "Ask me what I'm drawing, then pick a fight with me."

She glanced up at Colone again, seeing that he was bent over his paperwork, then she tried to get Tommy's attention. When he looked up, she glanced quickly back at Colone again, and seeing that he wasn't looking, she held up the sketch pad for Tommy to see what she had written.

His eyes grew wide as he read the message. He stared at her, glanced quickly at Colone, then mouthed at her, "Are you sure?"

She lowered the pad and nodded. Tommy got up off his cot and stretched while she flipped the page over and began a quick sketch of the camp, as seen from across the lake.

Tommy waited a couple of minutes, then asked, "So what are ya drawin'?"

"What's it to ya?" Megan said.

Colone glanced up, irritated at being disturbed. "Hey, pipe down, Jarvis," he said, scowling.

Tommy grabbed the bars of the holding cell. "I was just curious about what she was drawin'," he said insolently, his tone as much as saying, "Go ahead and make something of it."

Megan held up the sketch pad so Tommy could see it. "There," she said, sarcastically. "You happy?"

"No," said Tommy.

"Why?"

Tommy grimaced. " 'Cause it stinks."

Megan threw the sketch pad at him. It bounced off the bars and fell to the floor just outside the cell. Tommy quickly bent down and reached out through the bars, picking up the pad and pulling it inside the cell.

Megan stood up, facing him, looking angry. "Okay, give it back," she said, holding her hand out.

"Come and get it," Tommy said.

Colone shoved his chair back hard and stood up. "Bastard," he said. "Megan, I'll get it."

But Megan was already in front of the holding cell, reaching through the bars for the pad. "Give it to me, punk!"

Tommy grabbed her arm suddenly and pulled her close up against the bars. He started kissing her passionately through the bars, grinding his mouth into hers. She struggled against him, making muffled sounds, pretending to be scared.

Colone raced across the room and grabbed Megan with one arm, reaching through the bars toward Tommy with the other, grappling with them, trying to separate them, suddenly terrified of what would happen if Garris came in and saw this scene. Megan's hand stealthily reached down toward Colone's bolstered revolver and her fingers closed around the grip. She allowed herself to be tom away from Tommy, bumping up hard against Colone as she pretended to stagger back, using the contact as a distraction while she lifted the revolver from its holster.

Colone reached through the bars, trying to grab Tommy, who quickly pulled away from him, backing away into the cell.

"You stinkin' shithead!" yelled Colone. "I oughtta—"

"Let him out of there," said Megan from behind him, a hard edge to her voice.

Colone turned around to face her. A red laser dot appeared right on the tip of his nose as Megan pointed his own revolver at him. Stupidly, he reached down toward his holster, only to find it empty. He looked back up at Megan and smiled weakly.

"Come on, Megan," he said lamely, "don't clown around."

She held the gun on him dead-steady. She knew how to use it. Colone had been there at the range when her father had taught her how to shoot. He suddenly felt scared.

"I ain't the one with the funny red nose," said Megan harshly, her voice full of contempt for the man who'd spent the past year drooling over her as if she were a piece of meat. "Open the cell and exchange places with him." She cocked the hammer. "*Now*."

Tommy moved up close behind Colone. "Better do as she says," he said, recalling what Garris had said to him back in the cemetery and throwing his exact words back at Colone, " 'cause wherever the red dot goes, a bullet is sure to follow."

"You brainwash her, you sonofabitch?" Colone said furiously.

"Something like that," Megan said, giving him a nasty smile.

Colone wanted to call her bluff. He was almost sure she

wouldn't dare to shoot, but he wasn't completely sure and he was afraid to take the chance. She held that gun like she knew what she was doing and she didn't look at all nervous or uncertain. Damn bitch is just crazy enough to do it, thought Colone. She'd been getting away with murder, tearing up the back roads all over the county with her friends, knowing every last one of the local police force had been reluctant to arrest the sheriff's daughter, and she probably felt that she could get away with this as well. Anyone crazy enough to take up with a psycho killer like Tommy Jarvis might just be crazy enough to blow away a cop with his own gun. Well, honey, thought Colone, this time you've gone too far. You've hung it right out over the edge. Your daddy being sheriff ain't gonna get you out of this one. You've just burned all your bridges. It's gonna be worth it to see you get your sweet, tight little ass handed to you. He reached for his keys and unlocked the door of the holding cell.

Tommy pushed the door open, grabbed Colone, and shoved him hard back into the cell. He slammed the door shut, locked it, then pulled out the keys and threw them across the room. He took the laser-scoped revolver away from Megan and turned back to face the deputy. Colone's eyes went wide with fear and he started shaking his head mutely, backing away into the cell. Tommy took the gun and threw it across the office, then he grabbed Megan and pulled her toward the door.

They raced outside, heading straight for the Camaro. "You got the keys?" Tommy said.

"No, he took 'em," Megan said. She smiled, "But I got my Hide-a-Key." She crouched down and reached under the car, withdrawing a tiny metal box containing a spare ignition key. Tommy grabbed it from her.

"Sorry, Megan," he said. "Not this time."

"Wait a minute," she said, protesting, "I just—"

"I appreciate you getting me out," he said, "but I gotta finish what I started."

Megan stared at him as he opened the driver's side door, then quickly jumped in and slid over to the passenger's seat. "Well, come on, hot lips," she said, "let's go. You drive, I'll navigate."

Tommy shook his head in resignation and got in, knowing there was no arguing with her. Besides, there was no time to argue. He turned the key in the igniton and the engine started with a roar. He slammed the gearshift lever into first and stomped down on the gas pedal. The Camaro's wheels spun and smoked, found traction, and the car shot down the road, heading out of town, toward Cunningham Road and Camp Forest Green. Tommy prayed they weren't too late.

***

Little Nancy woke up from a bad dream. In the dream, there had been a monster stalking her, the same monster she had dreamed about before. It was a horrible, terrifying monster with no face. It just had scary eyes, eyes that never blinked, eyes that stared at her with burning hatred. She ran and ran, but she couldn't get away. The monster kept on coming and there was nobody to help her. It kept getting closer and closer. It was almost right on top of her, it was going to get her… and then she woke up, shivering breathless, afraid to move, not knowing where she was.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. A dream, it was only a bad dream. She frowned. Paula had promised that there wouldn't be any more bad dreams. And then she saw a shape, a dark figure moving slowly past the row of beds inside the cabin. She gasped and the dark figure heard her, whipped around... and it had no face! She saw two terrible, hate-filled eyes staring at her and she knew with a dreadful certainty that this was no dream. It was the monster with no face and it was coming right for her!

***

The wind was picking up as Sheriff Garris pulled into the campground. Officer Pappas and Thornton pulled in behind him in two patrol cars, lights flashing. Garris stopped the car and turned off the engine. He sat still for a moment, his hands gripping the wheel tightly. He took a deep breath, steadying his nerves. There'd be no sleep tonight, thanks to Tommy Jarvis. At least he finally had the psychopath in custody. Damn, he thought, what a fucking nightmare. When these children's parents find out about what's been going on here, all hell's going to break loose.

He wasn't going to take any more chances. He was going to straighten out this mess and station both Pappas and Thornton at the camp to watch the kids until he could get help from Carpenter and contact the children's parents… and the parents of the kids that had been killed. He wasn't looking forward to that. It was going to be hard. Real hard.

God damn, thought Garris. And I came here because I thought this was a quiet and peaceful town. God damn. He took another deep breath and opened the car door.

***

Nancy huddled beneath her covers in mute terror as Jason came closer, staring at her, hypnotizing her with his gaze. He saw his

shivering victim cowering before him, he imagined her warm blood spilling out onto the sheets and splattering the walls. Nancy was petrified, unable to cry out. That awful faceless face came closer, closer. She squeezed her eyes shut tightly, remembering what Paula told her, and began to pray in a quick, whimpering little voice.

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep —"

She could feel the monster coming closer.

"If I should die before I wake. I pray the Lord my soul to take. Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep—"

From outside, there came the sound of car doors slamming. Jason immediately turned toward the noise. He heard footsteps outside.

The child continued to pray fervently, her eyes shut tightly, her tiny hands gripping the covers for dear life. She didn't stop, afraid of what would happen if she did. She continued to recite the prayer, over and over and over, her entire body trembling as if she had a burning fever.

Jason was gone.

***

Garris surveyed the campground with his hands on his hips. Everything seemed quiet. He had a feeling it wasn't going to stay that way for long. Pappas and Thornton walked up to him.

"So what's the story here?" said Thornton.

"Why don't you boys nose around," said Garris. "I gotta break the news to Megan's friends about what's happened. Holler if you see anything."

"Like what?" sakd Pappas.

"Anything that don't belong," said Garris. "And don't wake the kids." He headed for the counselors' cabin.

The wind was whipping harshly now. It plucked at their clothes and blew Pappas's hair into his face. He fixed it, tossing his head and brushing his hair back with a practiced motion. Thorton grinned and nudged him.

"Come on, handsome," he said, taking out his black Kei light and snapping it on. Pappas made a face and pulled his own flashlight out of its plastic loop on his cartridge belt. It was going to storm again. The wind was really getting fierce. It whistled through the trees, causing them to bend sharply and blowing loose leaves and twigs everywhere. The two cops spread out in different directions, scanning the campground with their flashlights, secure in the knowledge that the killer was in custody. All that remained now was the cleanup and the real storm that would follow when the story got out the next morning.

Garris knocked on the door of the counselors' cabin. There was no response from inside. "Girls?" he said, raising his voice to be heard over the wind. "It's Sheriff Garris."

There was still no answer. Strange, Garris thought. The light was on. He opened the door slowly and looked in. He gasped for a breath, but he couldn't take in the air, as if he had been punched right in the solar plexus.

The entire room was splattered with blood. It looked like a slaughterhouse. The fluid streaked the walls and dripped down off the ceiling, as if someone had thrown buckets of it all around. The floor of the cabin was slick with gore and marked with bloody footprints. The sharp, bitter smell of it assailed his nostrils as the proteins in the blood broke down, filling the cabin with the choking stench of death.

He bolted out the door, fighting down the bile rising in his throat, running panic-stricken for the children's cabins. Jesus, he thought, oh sweet Jesus, don't let it be, please don't let it be...

***

Office Thornton stood on the shore of the dark lake, his flashlight beam scanning the boats tied up at the small dock. Seeing nothing unusual, he walked out on the dock to take a closer look, just to make sure. Garris was wired so tight, it wouldn't do to overlook anything. He shone his flashlight down into the boats. Nothing there. No dead bodies in the boats, he thought, with a grin. He turned around and played the flashlight out before him, surveying the windswept woods. The beam was suddenly reflected back at him by a bright white hockey mask.

Jason reached down to the weapons belt and withdrew one of the razor-sharp devil darts, raising it high to throw it.

Thornton saw the weapon and went for his revolver.

Jason hurled the dart.

It whistled through the air and struck Thornton in the forehead before he even touched the gun, penetrating his skull with a sound like a nail being driven through a piece of wood. Thornton went reeling backward from the force of the impact. He fell back into one of the tarp-covered boats, his lifeless eyes staring up at the wind-torn sky, the dart protruding from the center of his forehead. A thin trickle of blood wormed its way out of the small hole and leaked down into his right eye.

***

Garris stood in the darkness of the cabin, looking down the row of cots at the sleeping boys, his chest rising and falling heavily. Thank God, he thought, swallowing hard. He backed out of the cabin and softly

closed the door, then sprinted toward the girls' cabin. He ran up the steps and grasped the doorknob. He closed his eyes, afraid of what he might find. Clenching his teeth, fearing the worst, he slowly opened the door.

Relief washed over him as he saw the little girls all sleeping peacefully. Then he froze as his gaze fell on Nancy's bed. The covers had been thrown back and the pillow was on the floor beside the empty bed. There was no sign of the child.

***

The orange Camaro rocketed down the road like a cruise missile, all four wheels leaving the ground as it topped a rise and became briefly airborne until it came down and struck the road surface again, the shocks bottoming out, the impact jarring the car's occupants. Megan stared at Tommy, frightened of the wild abandon with which he was driving. The car skidded around a curve at over a hundred miles per hour; the back end came around and started to slide. Tommy overcorrected and the car whipped around, sliding the other way as the tires screamed in protest. He fought the wheel and somehow managed to get the Camaro straightened out again, all without backing off the pedal for an instant.

"Let me know when you're about to blast into hyperspace,' said Megan nervously. "I'll fasten my seat belt."

"I got a bad feeling we're already too late," said Tommy, gritting his teeth.

Megan turned to look over her shoulder at the supplies in the backseat. They were packed in a large sack. She shook her head and glanced at Tommy doubtfully.

"Are you sure this is gonna work?" she said uncertainly. She would have felt a lot more comfortably with a gun like that cannon Rick Colone had, but Tommy had just tossed it away. It made no sense to her, but then hardly anything that had happened in the past twenty-four hours seemed to make any sense. "Why didn't we bring that gun and just blast him away?"

Tommy shook his head, keeping his eyes on the road ahead of them. "It might not have any effect on him," he said. "The only way to stop Jason is to return him to his orignial resting place, where he drowned in 1957."

"Lake Forest Green?" said Megan.

"Crystal Lake," said Tommy, correcting her, "where this nightmare began."

***

The wind had blown the fog away and Crystal Lake was churning in the moonlight. Its surface seemed to boil as the wind shrieked across it, kicking up whitecaps. The forest seemed to groan with pain as treetops were nearly bent to the breaking point.

Officer Pappas walked along the lakeshore by the camp, skirting the beach where the young campers went swimming, watching the floats that marked off* the deep water bobbing violently up and down. His flashlight beam played across the lakefront and the bushes. He was getting tired of this. What he really wanted was to be back at Bill's Meadowbrook Bar, tossing back a few beers and watching late night shows on the big-screen TV.

He thought he heard footsteps in the bushes to his right. He stopped, shining his light around, straining to hear over the wind. He started moving slowly toward the bushes. Maybe it was just my imagination, he thought. Damn spooky night like this, a guy's liable to hear anything... He heard the rustling again. He shone his light in the direction of the sound.

"All right," he shouted, "come out of there!"

There was no response.

Pappas yanked his Ruger Speed Six out of its holster. He was certain there was someone there. He held both hands stretched out before him, one hand aiming the gun, the other aiming the flashlight.

"I'm gonna ask you one more time," he yelled, "come out of there!"

Still no response.

Pappas licked his lips nervously and started moving toward the bushes, his finger on the trigger. He kept playing his light across the bushes, squinting, trying to penetrate the darkness. He was within a couple of feet of the spot now, any minute...

Something came flying out of the bushes and struck his leg.

Pappas cried out and almost fired, but at the last instant he realized that it was only a terrified child clad in pajamas, a little girl that clung to his leg as if for dear life, whimpering like a frightened little animal. He caught his breath and shut his eyes for an instant, trying to make his heart slow down. He lowered his gun and looked down at the little girl.

"Hey, hey," he said kindly, "what are you doing, running around out here? Now you get back to bed."

Nancy squeezed his leg still tighter, refusing to let go. "No," she said, trembling like a leaf. "There's a scary man!"

Pappas smiled. "What scary man?"

Jason exploded out of the bushes.

Nancy let out a piercing scream and ran shrieking back toward the camp. Pappas borught his gun up and opened fire, emptying all six

chambers into Jason's chest, but the bullets didn't even slow him down. Pappas couldn't believe it. He screamed as two powerful hands grabbed his head and started to squeeze.

Pappas thrashed like a landed fish in the unbreakable grip, screaming hoarsely as the pressure built inexorably. He felt his cheekbones cracking, his jawbone splintering and breaking, his eyeballs popping out of their sockets, his skull caving in like an eggshell. Blood filled his mouth and turned his screams into a horrible, sustained gurgle as he choked on his blood, and then there was no sound at all except for a crackling of pulverized bone.

Jason threw the lifeless hulk down onto the ground and stared at it, for a moment feeling a relief from the burning hunger, a respite from the relentless voice that urged him on, but only for a moment. It came back again, louder and more insistent than ever, filling up his mind, driving him onward, screaming for more blood.

Slowly, he turned back to the camp.

# EIGHT

Sheriff Garris threw open his car door, reached inside, and grabbed the pump shotgun off the rack. He didn't pause to close the door, but immediately started sprinting in the direction of the gunshots and the screams. As he rounded the comer of the boys' cabin, Nancy came screeching toward him, running in blind panic. He caught her, and the terrified girl started struggling against him, twisting in his grasp and screaming. He held her tight and crouched down, hugging her close to his chest.

"Hold on," he said. "Take it easy. I got you. Everything is fine."

The noise had awakened all the children. Their faces were all pressed up against the windows, staring down, petrified. The little girls had all come running to the boys' cabin when they heard the screaming start, and as Sheriff Garris entered the cabin, holding Nancy in his arms, they all stared up at him fearfully, not knowing what was going on. Garris put Nancy down and gently prodded her toward the other children.

"Kids," he said, "listen to me *very* carefully. I want everyone to lie down on the floor and stay there. Do *not* get up until I come back. Now hurry."

The children instantly obeyed, some of them scrambling under the cots, others huddling together in the corners, covering their heads with their arms. Garris lingered only long enough to make certain they were all down on the floor and relatively safe from any possible stray fire, then he left the cabin, pumping his shotgun as he ran in the direction from which the screams and gunshots had come. He didn't know what the hell was going on, but he had a sick feeling that he had been wrong about everything right from the start. Tommy Jarvis couldn't be responsible for whatever was going on out there in wind-torn night; Tommy Jarvis was locked up in a cell back in Forest Green. Garris ran hard, his shotgun held before him, ready to be brought into action in an instant.

There was no sign of either of his officers. He thought about those gunshots. And those bonechilling, frenzied screams. The wind whipped the trees and bushes all around him, causing him to twitch at every movement, never knowing what could be the wind whistling through the brush or an unknown attacker bearing down on him.

There was no sign of anyone down by the lake. Garris surveyed the area quickly, alert for any sign of sudden movement. Nothing. Slowly, he turned and headed toward the shadows between the two cabins, hunkering in a semicrouch and looking all around him, holding his shotgun ready. His eyes strained to see in the darkness ahead of him. Suddenly, his feet struck something and he tripped and

fell, slamming down on a soft and yielding mass.

It was the body of Officer Pappas. Garris had fallen facedown onto the corpse, his nose pressed against the crumpled, bloody skull. There was nothing left of Pappas's face. It looked like a bloody afterbirth.

Garris gagged and recoiled from the horror, scrambling up from it in revulsion. He got to his feet, gasping for breath, turned—

—and came face-to-face with Jason Vorhees.

Garris quickly backed away, adrenaline hammering through his system, his mind racing. They stood motionless, staring at each other. It can't be, thought Garris. It can't possibly be him. He's *dead*.

Jason lunged at him.

Garris raised the shotgun and fired point-back at his chest.

The blast sent the masked killer flying backward to land motionless upon the ground, flat on his back. Garris exhaled heavily, lowered the shotgun, and approached the body.

*It sat up.*

Garris snapped the gun back up, pumped it and fired again. The blast knocked Jason back down.

And he sat up again.

With disbelief, Garris fired again, three times, point-blank, but each time Jason got back up. It wasn't possible, thought Garris. *Nobody* could survive that. He tried to fire again, but the shotgun was empty and Jason was heading for him.

A flak vest! That had to be it, Garris thought, the killer's wearing body armor. He dropped the useless shotgun and pulled out his Colt Python. He habitually loaded it half and half; the first three rounds were thirty-eight, standard police roundnose, the last three were full magnum loads, .357 jacketed hollowpoints, a round capable of penetrating cinderblock. He emptied all six chambers into the killer's face.

The bullets entered the plastic mask, punching through it, snapping Jasons's head back. But he kept on coming. The bullets had about as much effect on him as a right cross would have on Rocky Balboa.

The gun clicked upon an empty chamber and Garris panicked. He bolted, running for his life, with Jason right behind him.

***

Megan's Camaro roared into the campgrounds and came to a screeching, sliding stop next to the police cars. She jumped out of the car, looking all around for her father. Tommy grabbed the heavy sack from the backseat.

"See?" said Megan, pointing to the cars, feeling relieved. "They

*did* show up. Isn't that great?"

"I hope so," Tommy said, struggling with the heavy sack, not sounding very certain.

Megan saw the lights on in the counselors' cabin and started running toward it.

"Megan, wait!" cried Tommy.

Megan ran up the cabin steps and threw open the door.

The stench of death knocked her off balance, and she screamed as she saw the sea of red. Blood was coating the floor and smeared upon the walls, dripping down from the ceilings as if the bodies of her friends had been exploded, flinging entrails and viscera in all directions.

*"Oh, God!"*

The children! She ran toward the cabin as Tommy chased after her, slowed down by the heavy sack. He tried to grab her, but she ran past him, ignoring him, thinking only of the children.

"No, Megan!" Tommy shouted.

Megan burst through the door, setting off a chorus of screams from the little kids. She stopped, scanning the room quickly as frightened little faces stared up at her from the floor and from underneath the beds.

"It's okay," she said, holding up her hands. "It's me—Megan. Don't be afraid."

Nancy and several of the smaller children ran to her, throwing their arms around her, clinging desperately, frightened out of their wits.

"It's all right," Megan said, struggling to make herself sound calm, doing her best to reassure the kids even while her own heart slammed against her ribs like an animal trying to burst out of its cage. "Shhh, shhh—"

Tommy looked in and heaved a deep sigh of relief, everything seemed to be all right. He quickly turned and ran back down the steps. He raced toward the dock, struggling with the heavy sack. He ran out upon the planked landing and started to board one of the boats, then recoiled in horror from the sight of Officer Thornton, lying flat on his back in the bottom of the boat, eyes glazed with death and blood coagulating around the devil dart stuck in his forehead.

Tommy turned away from the dead cop, grimly setting his mind to finish doing what he had to do. He boarded the other boat. It had seen better days. The wood creaked in protest as he stepped aboard and he noticed water puddled at the bottom of the boat. He pressed his lips together. It was going to have to do. He had no other choice. He noticed the gas can sitting by the outboard motor and he checked it quickly, then he opened up the sack and pulled out a long and heavy, three-eighths-inch case-hardened steel chain. The links clanked as he

dumped the chain into the bottom of the boat, then reached into the sack and pulled out several large steel padlocks.

Back in the cabin, Megan was doing her best to calm down all the kids, trying desperately not to think of the gruesome scene that had confronted her back in the counselors' cabin. Never in her life had she seen or even imagined anything so ghastly, but she closed her eyes and tried to force the horrifying image from her mind. Some of the children were crying, others were huddling beneath their beds, curled up into little balls and shivering. A few, like Nancy, had gathered around her, seeking the security of the girl's embrace. Megan clenched her fists, her fingernails digging deep into her palms. She tried to make her voice sound normal, praying that she wouldn't start screaming the moment she opened her mouth.

"Now I gotta find my daddy, the sheriff, so we can all go home," said Megan. "Okay?"

The children nodded, too frightened to speak.

Megan stood up and headed for the cabin door. She paused before going outside.

"So you stay right here and we'll be back to get you," she said, trying to keep her voice from trembling. "Everyone lie back down and don't worry."

Billy and Teyn, the two twelve-year-olds, looked at each other from the floor beneath their beds.

"What do you think?" said Billy in a frightened voice.

"I think we're dead meat," Said Teyn.

Megan ran outside, looking wildly all around the campsite for her father. "Daddy!" she yelled, her voice breaking. "Dad, *answer* me!"

Tommy was struggling with a large and heavy rock, rolling it across the landing near the boat. He had a feeling that Sheriff Garris would not be answering anyone, ever again.

"Megan!" he shouted. "Use your dad's car radio and call for assistance! And an ambulance!"

Megan stopped in her tracks, staring at Tommy, suddenly realizing what he meant about the ambulance. God, no, she thought, please, please don't let Daddy be hurt, please. She ran to her father's car, grabbed the door handle, and yanked the car door open...

Sissy's bloodstained head rolled out and landed at her feet.

Megan threw her hands up to her face and let out a throat-rending scream. "Oh*, God! Oh, my God!"*

She backed away from the car, shaking her head violently, unable to stop screaming.

Lying on the floor beneath his bed inside the cabin, Tyen heard the screams and looked at Billy, nodding fearfully.

"*Real* dead meat," he said.

***

Sheriff Garris could think of nothing but escape. He ran as fast as he could, gasping for air, plunging into the woods, heedless of the branches whipping at his face, thinking only of the *thing* that was pursuing him, a thing that couldn't possibly be alive, a thing that even shotgun blasts and slugs from a .357 Magnum couldn't stop.

Jason kept right on his trail, running strong and steady, crashing through the woods after the sheriff, fired by an insatiable need to destroy, urged on by the demon voice inside his mind, the voice that exhorted him to run down his prey and kill it with his bare hands. He felt it as a gnawing hunger. He wanted to plunge his fingers into the sheriffs stomach and tear out his intestines, cram them into the man's mouth, and drive them down his throat, smashing his teeth and feeling the warm blood spurting upon his hands. He wanted to rip the skin right off his face, snap all his ribs like they were wishbones, tear his body into shreds, and fling the organs up into the trees, where birds could feed upon them. He wanted to bathe in the man's blood, to reduce him to a shapeless, gory pulp, to experience his death, to *taste* it, to make another sacrifice to the hateful, nameless forces that forever drove him onward, refusing to allow him rest, bringing him back again and again to kill for them.

He stopped, the bloodlust pounding through him, listening for the sounds of his prey crashing through the woods ahead of him. He cocked his head to one side, straining to hear, but the sounds of flight had ceased. He hesitated, then started to retrace his steps, feeling his prey hiding somewhere close by, sensing his victim's fear.

Sheriff Garris cowered in the bushes, scant inches away. Couldn't Jason hear his pounding heart? Couldn't he smell his fear? Garris held his breath as the beast passed him, lying utterly still, afraid to move a muscle.

Then he heard Megan's piercing scream.

*"Daddy! Where are you! Help us! Answer me, please! Help!"*

Jason stopped, listening.

Garris didn't breathe.

Then Jason started moving once again, grimly, purposefully.

Garris peeked out of the bushes and saw Jason stalk by without seeing him, heading toward the sound of Megan's voice.

"No!" shouted Garris. "Not her!"

Forgetting the danger to himself in the face of the threat to his daughter's safety, Garris launched himself from his hiding place. With a roar of rage, he crashed through the bushes and leaped at Jason, tackling him from behind and bringing him down hard. He sat on the killer's back screaming, driving him down into the ground. He rained

blows down on Jason with all his might, pounding him relentlessly, grunting and crying out with each blow, wanting to beat the merciless killer to death with his bare hands.

For a moment, Jason lay still beneath the rain of blows, seemingly succumbing to the punishment, but then his body tensed and he rolled over beneath Garris, looking up at him with loathing, reaching for the enraged man. He ignored the blows and grabbed for his head, forcing it back, bending the lawman's body backward, forcing him further back and down as Garris struggled uselessly, his face contorted with agony. His head was nearly touching his feet and then there was a loud *crack*, like the sound of wood splitting, as the sheriffs spine snapped, his back broken in half.

Seeing everything before him through a red mist of homicidal fury, Jason threw the sheriffs limp body aside. It fell into the bushes like a bundle of wet rags and Jason promptly forgot about it as he concentrated on the screaming voice he heard coming from the camp.

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"You gotta help me look for him," said Megan, tears streaming down her face as she struggled to help Tommy load the heavy rock into the boat. "We need him to help us."

Tommy ignored her, straining to lower the boulder, bracing himself and trying to ease it down slowly. There was a sharp crack as the heavy boulder landed in the bottom of the boat. Exhausted, Tommy exhaled heavily and bit his lower lip, worrying about the soundness of the little craft.

"Okay," he said, "hand me those padlocks."

Megan was hysterical. "Did you hear me?" she screamed at him.

"Yes," said Tommy. "And I said, hand me those padlocks."

Responding to the commanding tone of his voice, Megan angrily thrust the padlocks at him. "You're gonna be sorry!" she shouted at him.

Tommy started to padlock the chains securely around the large rock. "I hope not," he said. He straightened out the rest of the heavy chain and fashioned a noose with it.

Megan was pacing on the dock, utterly disoriented, her eyes unfocused, on the edge of complete nervous collapse. There was only so much anyone could take and the horror of the abattoir inside the cabin, the sight of Sissy's head falling at her feet, the thought of Cort with a knife rammed through his skull, and all the rest of her friends dead—all horribly butchered and now her father—no, her father couldn't be dead too. What would happen to them if her father had been killed? Who could help them now? Her mind was on the edge of

coming unhinged.

Tommy untied the boat and pushed off from the dock, heading out into the choppy water. "Megan!" he shouted, over the fiercely blowing wind. "Get back into the cabin with the kids!"

She kept stumbling back and forth on the dock, pacing aimlessly, looking all around her in confusion.

"Megan, please!" Tommy shouted.

She stopped and stared him for a moment with puzzlement, then it dawned on her that he was leaving her alone and panic welled up in her again.

"No, wait!" she shouted desperately. "You can't do this!"

Tommy turned to start the outboard motor.

"Megan," he shouted, "get in there with them before it's too late!"

The door of the cabin flew off its hinges and the children ran screaming from the terrifying vision that filled the doorframe, fleeing from the blood-spattered maniac with the burning eyes. But there was nowhere to run. They huddled together, screaming, at the back of the cabin. Their worst nightmares had come to life.

The sound of the children screaming penetrated Megan's shock. Forgetting her own fear, she ran back toward their cabin while Tommy stood in the drifting boat, watching helplessly.

*"Megan! No!"*

Megan was only a few yards from the cabin when the window exploded in a shower of glass and Jason came flying through it, landing on the ground before her. She screamed as the powerful, bloodstained hands grabbed her head, as the burning eyes bored into her with their maniacal, bestial gaze...

*"JASON!"*

The masked face turned toward the sound.

Tommy stood up in the boat out on the lake, waving his arms and shouting.

"Come on, Jason!" he shouted, goading the killer, desperate to make him forget Megan. "It's *me* you want! Come and get me!"

The image of Tommy Jarvis standing over him, plunging down the iron spear, flashed through Jason's twisted brain, and mindless hate roared through him like a cataract. He threw Megan aside and she fell to the ground, trembling and hyperventilating, hardly able to believe that she was still somehow—miraculously—alive.

Gasping for breath, she got to her hands and knees and looked up to see the children gathered at the shattered window, gazing down at her, wide-eyed and immobilized with fear. Something like sanity returned to Megan as she saw the children, scanned their faces, doing a quick head count and realizing with amazed relief that Jason hadn't

had a chance to hurt them. He had let them live, as he had let her live, choosing instead to—oh, my God, she thought. *Tommy*!

"That's it!" Tommy taunted the killer from the boat, waving him on. "Come on, maggot head!"

Jason reached the shore of the lake and simply kept going as if the water wasn't even there, determined to reach the one person he wanted to kill most. He had found the one who had awakened him from his long sleep, the one who had disturbed his rest and brought back all the torment.

Tommy sat down in the boat, watching intently as Jason approached. He reached for the chain and noose and held it in his sweating hands, keeping it out of sight, breathing hard as Jason waded closer to him, moving deeper and deeper into the choppy water.

"Tommy, get out of there!" Megan screamed. "Row to the other side of the lake! Hurry!"

Jason stopped and turned back, looking toward Megan.

*No*, thought Tommy, his fury building. No, not Megan, damn it! He screamed at Jason. "Hey, asshole! It's *me* you want, remember? Come on, chickenshit! I'm sittin' here, waitin'!"

Jason turned back toward him, moving through the water like a hungry shark. The level rose up around him as he came toward the boat, moving closer and closer, the water climbing up around his chest...

Tommy held the chain noose out of Jason's sight, opening it wider, his hands trembling. He'd have one chance, that was all. He could not afford to blow it.

Jason was almost at the boat. The water was up around his neck.

The noose was ready, another three feet and...

Jason submerged just as he reached the boat, his head disappearing beneath the dark water.

Tommy almost screamed. He looked frantically from one side of the boat to the other, scanning the churning water, having no idea where Jason would surface.

He waited.

Nothing.

Panicking, Tommy grabbed the gas can and poured gasoline all around the boat, then he ignited it. He looked down into the flaming water, searching for any sign of Jason, knowing he would come back up. He saw bubbles rising and leaned out away from the boat, holding the noose over the bubbles...

Jason exploded up out of the water on the opposite side of the boat, breaking the surface like a Polaris missile. Tommy lost his

balance and fell, dropping the noose. He heard the boat crack. Water started to leak in fast around the rock. Jason grabbed at him and Tommy struggled to reach the noose.

Megan watching from the shore, beside herself, not knowing what to do. She watched the two figures grappled in the boat as the lake around it burned. The gasoline flames leaped up, starting to set the wooden boat on fire, silhouetting the two struggling combatants.

Jason grabbed Tommy's jacket and Tommy thrashed to break free of the grip. The breach in the boat's hull split wider and water started to pour in.

Tommy tired to reach the noose with his foot as Jason pulled him closer. He yanked his arm back hard, causing his sleeve to rip off in Jason's hand. He caught the noose with his shoe and reached for it as the boat rapidly filled up with water and then Jason leaped up and his fingers closed around Tommy's leg with an iron grip.

Tommy gasped, twisted around and slipped the noose over Jason's head. Enraged, Jason lunged at him and the old boat hull split open completely. The heavy rock sank, pulling Jason under with it, but Jason refused to be cheated of his victim. He maintained his grip on Tommy, dragging him down with him beneath the surface of the lake.

From the shore, Megan screamed hysterically.

The boulder sank down to the bottom of lake. Its chain pulled taut. Close beside the chainwrapped boulder, lying in the mud on the lake bottom, was a rotted old sign on which the faded words, CAMP CRYSTAL LAKE were painted. Spray-painted over the name was the word "blood."

At the end of the chain, Jason struggled to hold on to Tommy, refusing to let him go so that he could turn his full attention to the noose encircling his neck. With one hand he held on to Tommy's leg while with the other he vainly tried to loosen the choke-chain. Above them, the lake surface burned with gasoline fire.

Tommy was fighting desperately to free himself from Jason's grip before his breath gave out. The lust to kill overcame Jason completely and he abandoned his efforts to loosen the chain and instead pulled Tommy down, clamping his hands around his throat, bent on strangling him to death before he drowned. They thrashed beneath the surface of the lake, fighting to the death.

Megan watched helplessly from shore as burning pieces of the boat floated on the lake amid a rising cloud of bubbles. And then the bubbles stopped. She covered her mouth with dread, holding her breath.

Slowly, the gasoline flames on the water burned themselves out, leaving only several burning bits of wreckage from the boat drifting on the lake.

After what seemed like an agonizingly long time, Tommy's body floated to the surface.

Below, anchored vertically by the chain beneath the surface of Crystal Lake, Jason's body drifted like an underwater buoy.

Slowly, the children started to come out of the cabin. Megan stood stock-still, staring with shock out at the lake, at Tommy's body floating facedown on the surface. She was numb. The children came up close to her, surrounding her. It would be morning soon and the wind had died down to a gentle breeze.

Little Nancy saw Tommy floating out upon the lake and stared up at Megan sorrowfully. "Is he kill-ded?" she said, softly.

Megan blinked, the little girl's voice penetrating through her shock. She turned to the kids.

"Stay here," she said.

She ran down to the lake and dove in, swimming out toward Tommy's motionless body. She reached him and put her arm around his chest, pulling him to shore.

*Something grabbed her leg.*

Megan felt herself yanked down beneath the surface and she kicked with all her might, panicking, trying desperately to break free. Her head broke the surface of the water, but Jason still held on to her; she felt herself being pulled down again.

She reached out and grabbed the nearest thing, a large, floating piece of the boat's hull. It had the outboard motor mounted on it. She scrambled for the motor, pulling it closer to her, fighting to keep from being dragged under. Gulping for air and coughing, she pawed at the motor, yanking on it, starting it, pulling it loose...

The outboard broke loose from the wreckage and started to sink.

Jason looked up and saw the propeller blade spinning rapidly. He stared at the motor as it sank, coming directly at him. The spinning blade struck him, ripping through his neck and chest, boring into him like an auger, chewing through his flesh and sending a dark cloud of blood into the water.

His hand unclasped Megan's foot.

Megan coughed, sobbing and spitting out water, gasping for air. She grabbed Tommy once again and swam away as fast as she could, pulling for the shore.

Jason's mangled corpse hung suspended in the dark waters of Crystal Lake, returned to its original underwater grave. As darkness closed in around him, the bloodlust abated and he stopped hearing the demon voice. He felt no pain. The cool waters of the lake seemed soothing as they quenched the fires of his life. His last conscious thought was, *Maybe now they'll let me rest.*

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Megan dragged Tommy's body ashore. The children came running down to her, surrounding her as she bent over him and gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, as she had been taught in lifesaving class. She angled his head back and opened his mouth to clear it of any obstructions, making sure he hadn't swallowed his tongue. She pulled down his jaw, pinched his nostrils shut, took a deep breath, and exhaled into him.

There was no response.

She kept at it, refusing to accept that he was dead, trying to breathe life back into him, fighting back tears as she pushed down on his abdomen, desperately trying to revive him. Nancy watched Megan trying to bring Tommy back to life and she closed her eyes, putting her hands together and whispering a prayer.

Tears flowed down Megan's cheeks as she realized that it was useless. In an agony of fury and frustration, she struck Tommy's chest hard with her fists, hating him for dying and leaving her alone.

Tommy coughed and spat out water.

Megan cried out with joy and helped him to sit up. The children cheered. Little Nancy opened her eyes. When she saw that Tommy was nil right, she looked up at the sky and smiled a thank-you. Tommy looked up at Megan and smiled weakly. Overcome with relief, Megan threw her arms around him, hugging him close with all her strength.

Tommy looked out at the moonlit surface of Crystal Lake and sighed. He rested his head on Megan's shoulder and shut his eyes for a moment. The nightmares would not haunt him anymore. He had laid them all to rest, once and for all. Even if he hadn't made it, it would have been worth it. But he *had* made it, thanks to Megan. He hugged her close as they sat wet and shivering upon the shore.

"It's over, Megan," he said, quietly, holding her. "It's finally over. Jason is home."

The last burning piece of wood from the wrecked boat went out and Crystal Lake was quiet again. The storm passed by and the wind died down. The sky was starting to turn grey as the survivors huddled together on the shore. It was almost dawn.

# NINE

Martin crouched down over one of the graves in the Eternal Rest Cemetery, pulling up weeds. It was a warm day and the old caretaker worked slowly. No need to work up a sweat, he told himself, ’cause these folks ain’t in no hurry, they sure ain’t goin’ anywheres. He chuckled at his own witticism. Yep, it sure is a good day, he thought. Sun shinin’ down gently on a man’s back, warmin’ up his insides, soft breeze blowin’ from the north, no forecast of rain for a change, so the arthritis wouldn’t be actin’ up and a full bottle of Wild Turkey waitin’ for when he finished up his chores. He sighed with contentment, grateful for the fact that his job was still secure. He’d be all right so long as he didn’t ever have to sober up. A shadow fell across him and the old alcholic looked up, startled.

A look of tense, frightened recognition passed over Martin’s face and he quickly dropped the weeds and struggled to his feet, dusting his palms off against one another. When he spoke, his voice was overly friendly, obsequious, his manner that of a fawning, servile dog.

"You... ha-ha... frightened me," he said, slouching, almost genuflecting. "I was just, you know, cleanin’ up the place, you know."

The tall man in the dark suit stood motionless, silently staring down at the old caretaker. Martin squirmed beneath the directness of the gaze.

"Er... nice to see you again, Mr. Vorhees," he said, bobbing his head, avoiding the man’s eyes. "Haven’t seen you in Crystal... er, Forest Green, in quite some time."

The thin, pale face was framed by long, dark red hair heavily streaked with gray. It showed not a flicker of expression. The features were fine and chiseled, deeply etched. The mouth was thin and cruel. But the eyes... Don’t look at them eyes, thought Martin, no matter what you do...

"Hey, I’ve been takin’ *real* good care of your wife and son’s graves," said Martin, his voice trembling slightly. "Go look. You’ll be real pleased."

Those eyes were like a snake’s eyes, cold, feral, ancient; they made Martin think of mausoleums and crypts shrouded with cobwebs and covered with the dust of centuries; they made him think of beasts snarling and snapping at each other, teeth rending flesh and crunching bone; they made him feel as if a thousand worms were writhing underneath his skin.

The man silently reached into his back pocket and his gnarled hand withdrew a wad of bills. Wordlessly, he handed the money to Martin, who took it gingerly, careful to touch only the wad of bills and

not that clawlike hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Vorhees, thank you," Martin said, bowing and scraping like a serf before an aristocratic warlord, his face averted, looking at the ground, at the man's feet, shrinking from the burning gaze of those ancient, baleful eyes. "I'll leave you in private, like you like. Okay, er... bye. Thank you. Thank you."

The old drunken caretaker scuttled away between the tombstones, clutching his money like a starving dog hangs on to a bone. Sweet Jesus, he thought, sweat pouring off him, sweat that stank of sour mash. Thank God I got that grave cleaned up. He would've blamed me if he knew, but I cleaned it up, new sod and everything and it looks good, thank God. Oh, Jesus...

Vorhees walked slowly between the rows of headstones with a stately, measured tread, almost gliding, like a dark, predatory jungle cat. He stopped before the pair of tombstones marking the graves of his wife and son. He stared for a long moment at the simple inscriptions, then his gaze slowly traveled downward to stare at his son's grave.

The burning eyes narrowed slightly as they bored intently into the mound of earth. He leaned closer and his eyes grew wider; his pupils dilated. It seemed as if he was looking right down into the earth, his gaze penetrating, the soil like X rays, seeing the coffin of his son and the strange, broken body that it held now, the corpse of Allen Hawes.

Slowly, Jason's father straightened and turned to look after the old caretaker. Inside his shack, Martin upended the bottle of Wild Turkey and drank deeply, feeling the fire of the whiskey burn his throat, unable to stop shaking. He suddenly felt cold, as if someone had walked over his grave. He couldn't stop shivering. He sank down onto the floor in the corner of his little shack, hugging the whiskey bottle to him with both arms, trembling like a leaf and saying over and over, "I didn't, I swear I didn't, Mr. Vorhees, I didn't know, I swear—"

Vorhees turned away, his eyes scanning the horizon, searching. His gaze traveled in the direction of the lake, several miles away, not visible from the cemetery.

Crystal Lake was tranquil, sunlight sparkling on its bright blue surface. But underneath, something started rising, something white, something that moved quickly toward the surface...

The hockey mask bobbed up and floated on the surface of the lake, like a face gazing up at the bright sky with sightless eyes. For a moment, everything was still—utterly still—like the silence of the grave or the calm before the storm. Then the wind picked up and swept across the lake, through the woods, toward the town of Forest Green. A bank of thunderheads moved in, roiling the sky, and as the shadows

lengthened, the tall dark man silently turned and left the cemetery, slowly weaving back through the maze of tombstones like a specter.